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Sergei Vysotsky and Ilya Glazunov

A VIETNAM DIARY

The undaunted heroes

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For over twenty years Vietnam has been in the forefront of world news. The people of this small country, our planet's pain and pride, has amazed the world with its miraculous heroism.

For years the whole world has been following developments in Vietnam. The people of this small country has amazed the world with its miraculous heroism in the course of the open confrontation with the United States of America; the mightiest of all imperialist powers has been subjecting Vietnam to direct aggression. The world has had occasion to observe yet again that no force of arms is able to wipe out ideas, to wipe out a people defending its independence.

However eloquently the United States' diplomats speak of "peace" and "good will" and whatever new doctrines they enunciate, they cannot conceal the fact that in Indochina the USA is escalating its aggression. Following the collapse of their notorious "Vietnamisation" policy the US aggressors are now having recourse to most sinister and brutal methods of warfare: they are barbarously bombing areas in South Vietnam and towns and villages in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, destroying dams and dikes and employing so-called meteorological warfare methods. The barbarous destruction of living nature, conducted in Vietnam in accordance with CIA plans, is fraught with enormous danger to many future generations of the population of Indochina. "One act of aggression inevitably leads to another with more dangerous consequences," it is noted in the Soviet Government Statement of May 12, 1972. "New and more heinous acts of barbarity and crimes are added to those that have already been committed. As a result this war acquires a character that increasingly affects the interests of many countries and peoples."

The crimes of the United States' military are emphatically condemned by the Soviet people and all other honest people throughout the world. The Vietnamese, who have the support and full-scale assistance of the Soviet Union

and other socialist countries, in fact of all progressive mankind, are determined to defend their freedom and independence.

All men of honour in the world are declaring their solidarity with embattled Vietnam. "Hands off Vietnam!", "Yankes go home!" and "Shame on the butchers of Songmy!" are some of the slogans one can see in almost every country.

In appreciation of the massive support and assistance from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong said on the 25th anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: "The history of our Republic's birth, existence and development shows that each of the victories scored by the Vietnamese revolution is unthinkable without the victories of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, without the growth and consolidation of the world revolutionary movement."

The escalation of military brigandage will not bring the aggressor victory on the battlefield. Facts convincingly indicate that negotiations are the only way to a peaceful settlement. The body of proposals made by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and brought to the notice of the whole world provide a programme of action for such a settlement.

A flashpoint in the world, Vietnam has won the esteem of all progressive mankind. Much has been written about the courage of her defenders, about the mass heroism of her people, and much will yet be written. Military historians will assess and analyse the people's war, the heroic battles fought by the National Liberation Army of South Vietnam against the United States' bases, the superb air defences of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the titanic effort of that country's working class and peas-

Nguyễn Thái Zau,
a peasant from
the province of
Ngean, is a mem-
ber of the People's
Volunteer Corps



antry. Writers will record for all time the strength of the people's spirit, their devotion to their homeland and their fidelity to the ideals of the revolution.

Vietnam as it was in 1967 is something that I and Ilva Glazunov shall never forget. As we travelled many hundreds of miles along Democratic Vietnam's front-line roads we went out of our way to find out as much as possible about the country, the life and work of its people and the struggle they are waging . . . All entries in this diary of our journey and all Ilva's sketches and portraits were written and drawn on the spot among Vietnamese soldiers, at Vietnamese factories, during brief encounters with the people we met on our travels, in the course of conversations by the light of tiny kerosene lamps in peasant huts and in the offices of ministers of state.



The authors with People's Volunteers from Zone IV (Sergei Vysotsky on the far left and Ilya Glazunov in the centre)

VLADIVOSTOK - HAIPHONG

The point from which Soviet steamers set sail to take cargoes to fighting Vietnam



A day before we flew into Vladivostok a number of ships left for Vietnam, both tankers and cargo-ships. The steamer *Razdolnoye* on which we were to set off for Haiphong was to sail the next day. Ships with cargoes destined for the DRV leave the Soviet Union almost every day.

When we arrived in Vladivostok the *Razdolnoye's* cargo was still being loaded. Two cranes were nimbly lifting sacks of flour and lowering them into the hold. Young dockers were working for all they were worth, hurrying to make the most of the sunny day which had come at last after interminable drizzle and sleet which had made it impossible to load the cargo of flour.

The officer in charge told us the cargo would be some three thousand tons altogether.

Since there was still time to kill before we sailed Glazunov and I went to have a look at the Naval Cemetery. We took the main road which goes out to Patroclus Bay and then turned off on to the narrow road leading to the cemetery. By the entrance there stood a tall obelisk, part of a monument to the men of the cruiser *Varyag*. Behind it stretched endless rows of graves, graves of sailors who had fallen in sea battles and those who had perished as they grappled with the elements. It was here that the writer V. K. Arsenyev, the outstanding explorer of Primorye and the Soviet Far East, was buried.

It was already evening by the time we got back to Vladivostok and the lights were going on. The town lay stretched out before us girting the bay at the foot of the hills which sloped down to the sea. Lights from radio-masts gleamed red in the distance. The port was particularly impressive now that all the ships were lit up. A siren from one of the launches or



Yuri Maximovich Ulkin, captain of the *Razdolnoye*

tugs would pierce the night air every now and then.

While our ship was still lying at anchor we could see Vladivostok stretching out like a gleaming horseshoe behind us. Sleep was very far from our minds, now that we were about to set off on a long journey, a journey to a country that was a focal point of world affairs.

At four o'clock a border-guard launch drew up and the last formalities before we lifted anchor were soon dealt with.

Captain himself was on watch. Yuri Maximovich Ulkin was a kind man with a ready



Loading the *Razdolnoye*

smile, very prepossessing. I noticed how quickly we pulled out from the pier and got under way in the dark. Two or three short commands given in an infinitely calm voice and we were off. There was no fuss or shouting on the deck or the bridge.

Immediately after breakfast the next morning there was a loud knock at the door of our cabin and a summons from the captain to go up on to the bridge. A plane was skimming low over the water in our direction. With a roar it swept over us, almost knocking the top off the ship's masts. Then it swooped at us again and this time I took a photograph. It was a four-engine

plane and the number was easy to make out—US Air Force 150512. With the help of a catalogue we soon worked out that it was an Orion armed with depth-charges and torpedoes.

The plane went on circling round us for about an hour, diving low and looping the loop. We had a fine view of the pilot in a white helmet and armed with a cine-camera. He was obviously filming the *Razdolnoye* as she sailed on her way. At first it held our attention but then we each went about our work. Ilya and I sent our first report back to the paper at home.

We soon got to know the various members of the crew—Iona Grigoryevich the electrician, a Greek by birth who had spent a whole year working in Vietnam. There was no end to his indignation at what the Americans were doing: "What monsters they are! They're laying the country to waste, burning down whole towns. Surely they must realise that all the Vietnamese want to do is to live in peace and be left to their own devices . . ."

I had ample opportunity to study the well-ordered life on board our ship and to admire the mutual respect with which all members of the crew treated each other. Everyone knew what he was about and no one chivvied anybody else. At first glance it seemed as if things happened automatically, but obviously a good deal was thanks to the efficiency of the captain and the first officer.

For several days the weather was overcast and dreary. The wind lashed up foamy waves. An endless succession of American planes kept hovering overhead, but no one paid much attention to them because we all had work to do.

At six o'clock one evening before the assembled crew, the captain gave a short, clear outline of the crew's responsibilities during the

testing voyage. He mentioned that there had been reports in the press to the effect that the Pentagon "hawks" had called for mines to be laid at the approaches to Haiphong and Campha, so we had to be ready for all kinds of emergencies. One of the sailors called out: "Whatever happens we'll get through!" It was decided that we would get the flour through to our Vietnamese comrades whatever the cost, and in the course of the voyage the crew joined the Society for Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship.

Glazimov and I had brought with us presents donated by young Soviet schoolchildren for Vietnamese boys and girls. We also had letters from them and I read out some of these to the crew. The letters were very touching and full of concern for their brothers and sisters in a distant land. One of them was from the Ernst Thälmann Friendship Club in the town of Korablino (Ryazan Region). It read:

"Dear friends in Vietnam,

"The members of the Thälmann Club at School No. 2 in our town are sending you presents for children in Vietnam and the men fighting in the Liberation Army. We wish you every success in life and rapid victory over the enemies of your homeland. Hands off Vietnam!

"Your Soviet friends from the town of Korablino."

After that letter the sailors asked me if I had any others with me and I started reading letter after letter.

As we sailed into the Philippine Sea the weather was still overcast and there was a warm breeze blowing. It was much calmer but the green-white sea was still laced with thick foam reminiscent of melting ice-cream. The latest weather report promised us Force 6 and 7 winds in the South China Sea. We also heard over the radio that the Americans were shelling the

DRV coast from military vessels in the Tonking Gulf and that mines were being laid in the estuaries of the major rivers.

That night we crossed the Tropic of Cancer and picked up a Japanese weather report telling us that a typhoon had blown up near the Philippines, that had been christened "Sally".

An American plane appeared on the port bow of our ship



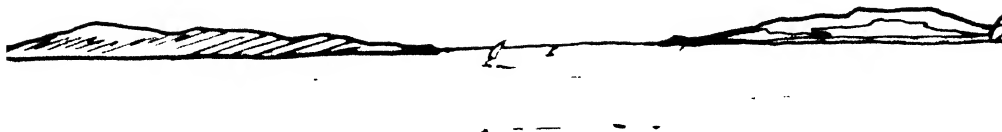
On the ninth day of our voyage we sailed past the island of Hainan and caught sight of crowds of Chinese fishermen. The sails of their junks bore red characters. Some of the junks were enormous with three sails and looked like floating dragons.

We were met by a storm as we sailed into the Tonkin Gulf, a Force 10 gale. Despite the weather there was still no let up in the American vigilance. Part of the ship's log for that day read: "At 20:40 an American plane with no wing markings was spotted flying head on at our starboard bow and then it started circling round the ship at various altitudes. At 22:10 it

let off two parachute flares. At 22:30 the plane continued to circle round the ship."

The captain himself came up to keep an eye on things. At two o'clock the next morning two dots appeared on the radar screen. They were approaching us quickly and it looked as if they would cut across our bows. Yuri Maximovich worked out that they would be in sight of the *Bazdolnoye* within fifteen minutes.

The storm was still raging fiercely and waves were lashing high over the deck. Soon we saw lights gleaming far away in the distance. They were drawing nearer and nearer and it was obvious that two large warships were heading



for us. The captain took the helm himself. The ships missed us by a hair's breadth and then changed course. They proceeded to sail on alongside the *Razdolnoye* and then cut across our bows. This went on for quite a long time and it was not till dawn that the "Americans" disappeared. Then the weather suddenly grew calmer and the waves started to lap gently against the sides of the ship again.

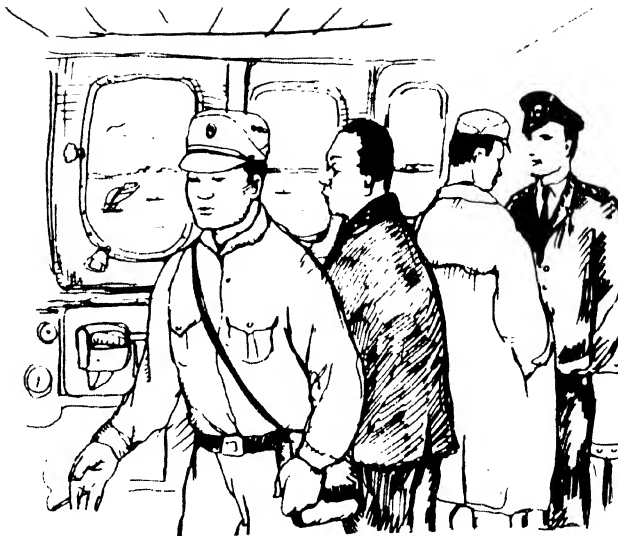
The Vietnamese coast is on the horizon!



PILOT DANG

he whole gulf was scattered with junks

Pilot Dang guides the *Razdolnoye* into Haiphong



After snatching a short sleep we came up on deck again to be met by a hot breeze blowing from the shore. Hills could be seen in the distance and weird rocks reminiscent of giant tusks loomed up out of the water. A thin haze stretched as far as the eye could see and the whole of the gulf was scattered with junks.

A pilot came out to meet us on a launch later that morning. It was he that was going to guide the *Razdolnoye* into the port of Haiphong. The pilot's name was Dang. He was a stocky man with a large impressive face and a proud up-standing bearing. He was dressed in a dark

blue uniform and had a scarf round his neck. A cursory glance told me he must be over fifty.

After talking alone with the captain, Dang went up on to the bridge and gave the command to raise the anchor. The ship moved slowly forward with its experienced guide at the helm.

Dang could speak Russian, so we were able to find out something about him and the life he led. He was born in the south where he lived till he was twenty, when he went to France to study at a naval college. He served in the French fleet and later fought against the French. He had never seen his father or mother again after he

left Vietnam for France, nor had he received any news of them.

Dang was a reticent character and his answers were short and to the point. His stern expression was only relaxed by the wistful sadness in his eyes, but when he started talking about the suffering that had fallen to his lot he belittled it with a merry smile.

At midday we docked at Haiphong. We had reached Vietnam at last. Here it was, the country in the forefront of world news. A siren started up just as we dropped anchor at the quayside. Frequent hisses and explosion of shells could be heard both in the town and on the ships in the harbour, and the sky was filled with smoke from the shell bursts. American Phantoms were swooping down over the town and the harbour installations, shells splashing and exploding in their wake.

The Chinese ships moored nearby were rather old, but looked picturesque painted all over with characters. Other ships included the Soviet craft *Borislav* from Odessa and the *Kandalakshales* from Arkhangelsk, the *Kontopucha* from the Polish port of Gdynia and a British cargo-ship from London inches deep in soot like a chimney-sweep.

All these vessels were waiting to moor up to be unloaded. Dang pointed out that four Soviet steamers were all being unloaded inside the port.

When Dang had come on board that morning there had been Vietnamese border guards with him. They sealed up the ship's radio set and asked us not to take any photographs. This of course was quite natural in war conditions.

That evening a launch was supposed to be coming to fetch Glazunov and myself, while the *Bardoluoque* would still have to wait quite a long time for her turn to be unloaded.

Late that evening the gentle whirl of a motor announced the arrival of a small launch complete with a camouflage of branches to conceal the muzzles of the machine-guns on board. There were no lamps or even a glimmer of light on board. A rope ladder was let down from the side of the ship and seven Vietnamese came aboard. Among them were girls dressed in attractive national costume and carrying bunches of *gladioli*. The two men accompanying them were the deputy editor of the youth paper *Trinh Van Nam* and Le Thanh from the Central Committee of the Union of Working Youth of Vietnam U.W.Y.

We had a long journey through Vietnam ahead of us which was to bring us into contact with countless new people and give us many new impressions, but nevertheless we were sad to say good-bye to the crew. The launch motor started up and we moved off. Soldiers kept a silent vigil at the machine-guns. A cool breeze was blowing in from the gulf and a smell of seaweed filled the air. There was not a flicker of light to be seen apart from the dim glow of a shielded cigarette. The brightly lit *Bardoluoque* on which we had travelled over 2,500 miles from our native shores was disappearing quickly into the distance.

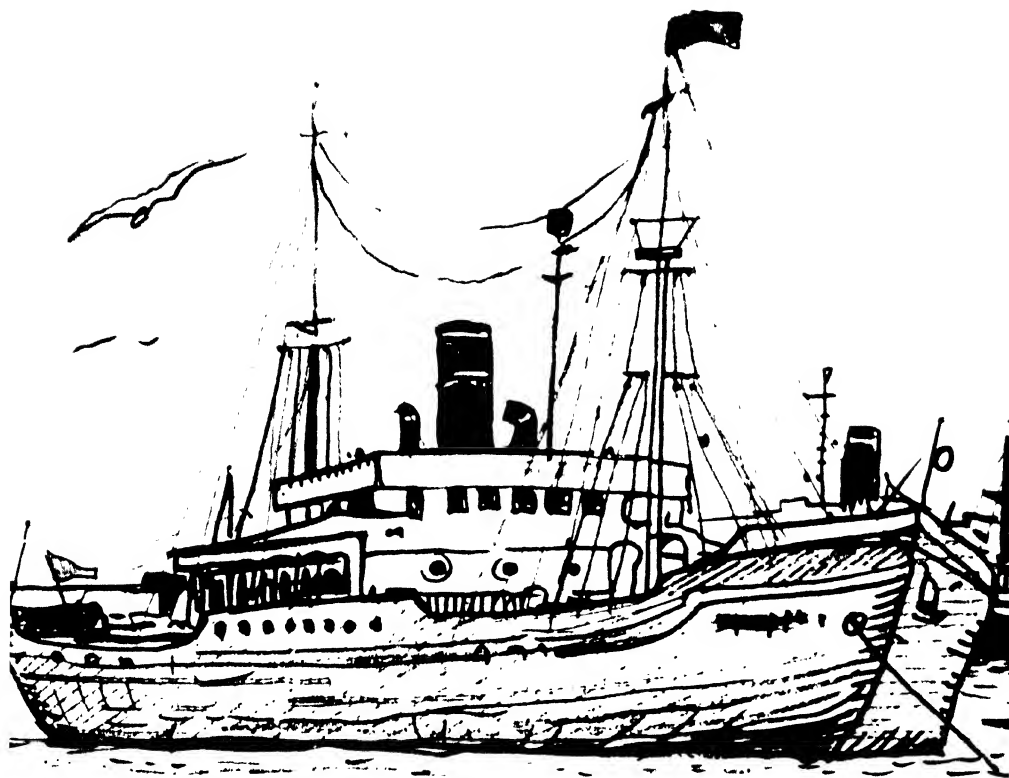
Haiphong lay in pitch darkness. The hotel where we were to spend the night was right next to the port. I noticed a great number of crates and packing cases lying on the pavements.

It was our first night on dry land for some time and it seemed strange to feel no rocking sensation and hear no lapping water. Our beds were equipped with mosquito nets and I thought to myself that if there was a surprise attack clambering out of such a bed would be quite an undertaking, but we would probably get used to it!



Our friend Lê Công, deputy editor-in-chief of a local youth paper





SIGNS OF WAR

We were woken up early the next morning. After drinking a quick cup of Chinese tea we loaded our luggage into a car that we recognised as coming from the Gorky Motor Works and ourselves climbed into another. We then proceeded to ten through the town at top speed. Our vehicles made a most picturesque sight covered over with green branches, they resem-

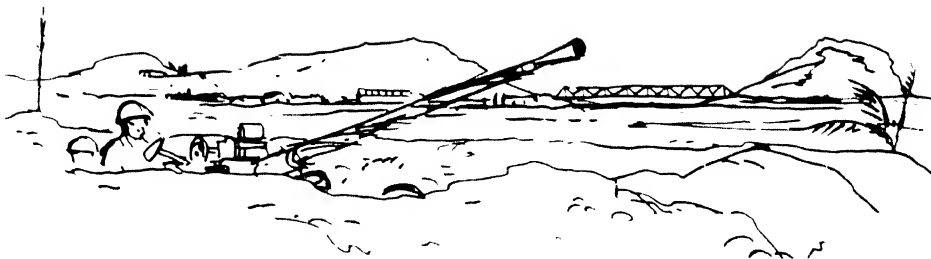
bled forest huts rather than mechanical conveyances.

Le Thanh was hurrying us on our way, he spoke excellent Russian after having studied in Moscow, explaining that an American air-raid was imminent. As a rule the planes used to appear at one and the same time every day.

Now we were able to get a good idea of the

On Vietnamese soil





extent of the bomb damage. There was a particularly large amount of devastation on the outskirts of the town. In the shade of the trees along all the streets stood enormous boxes and packing cases containing various types of equipment. We caught sight of the words, "Handle with Care!" and the names of various Soviet trading agencies.

When we had already left the town behind us the air-raid siren went off and rapid volleys of shots rang out.

The route to Hanoi—"Route No 5"—was an asphalt main road leading for the most part through a plain of rice-fields, but occasionally diving into the shade of closely planted trees among which clustered small villages. Here and there red-brick Catholic churches towered up above the bamboo and the palm groves. They were part of Vietnam's inheritance from the French colonial régime. There were unmistakable signs of war the whole way, such as women clearing away the rubble of a destroyed stone building, passing bricks from one to the other in a chain. The barrels of anti-aircraft guns

peeped out of breastworks and cyclists were wearing protective helmets and had carbines slung over their shoulders. And of course the trenches. Trenches lined the village streets and were to be seen by bridges over most of the rivers, in the fields winding away snake-like into the distance.

We had to wait about an hour and a half to make our way across a river. There was a whole chain of camouflaged lorries in front of us and we could see vehicles on the other side of the river as well. The whistle of a little old steam-train pulling a long row of goods-trucks could be heard in the distance. When we got out of our car we noticed that the bridge had obviously had a real battering in the course of the war. Some of the metal girders had been bent out of shape and almost all the rails on each side of it were gone. Some of the bridge floor had clearly just been repaired and all the woodwork was splintered. Heaven knows what kept the central props in place, for it looked as if the whole contraption was about to collapse. Yet by some miracle it continued to function. After a pene-



trating whistle from the soldier on sentry duty and a wave of the flag the train moved forward across the bridge puffing hard as it went. The camouflaged goods trucks made their way slowly across rattling loudly.

We stood there hardly daring to gasp for breath as the train edged forward. I thought to myself: what on earth would happen if there was an air raid right now? But the Vietnamese were utterly calm as they went about their work, there was no panic or bustle whatsoever. After looking round we caught sight of what must have been helping to keep them wits about them: on both banks right next to the bridge and at some distance we caught sight of the barrels of anti-aircraft guns, which gave the crossing a regular pabrade. As if he had read our thoughts Thanh said with a smile: "There are rockets as well! But they're hidden properly."

When he caught sight of Glazunov taking out his sketching-pad Thanh lifted his hand in a warning gesture: "No, you can't draw here. It's a military objective. I'm sure you understand . . . there's a war going on."

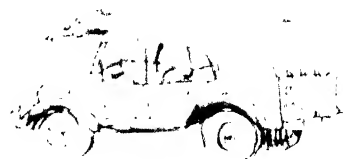
By this time it was cars making for Haiphong

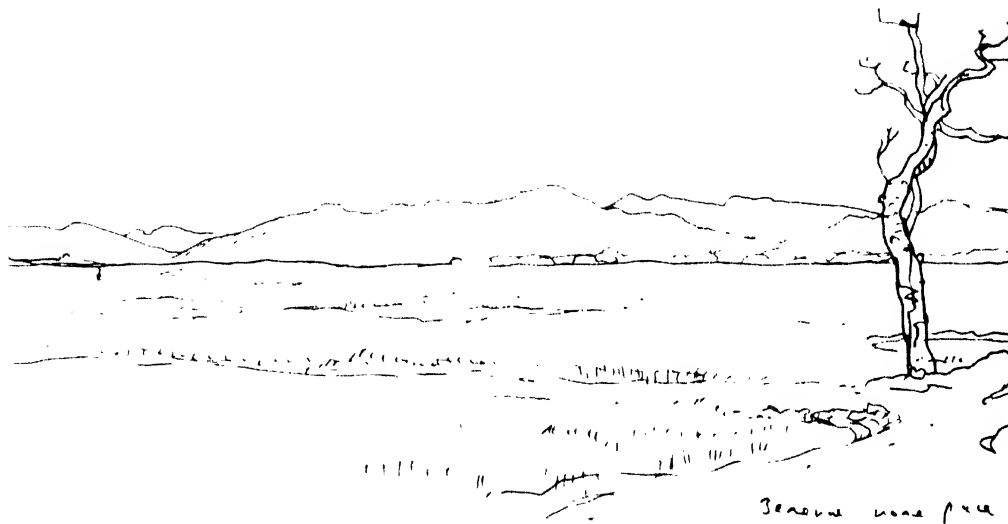
that were crossing the bridge and now I noticed that next to the bridge on both banks a recently laid stretch of railway track led down to the water's edge. There were piles of sleepers and other building equipment lying nearby with the inevitable branch camouflage. Those were most likely to provide an emergency substitute crossing in case the bridge was bombed to bits after all.

Another whistle was heard and our column of vehicles moved forward at last. As we drove along Thanh asked where we wanted to go and whom we wanted to meet. Our requests covered a very wide range: Thanh-hoa, Vinh, Hongay . . . a factory, rocket troops, coast-guards, fishermen, miners and if it was at all possible to meet some partisans from the south. Le Thanh promised he would make sure that most of these requests be complied with, but he pointed out that there might well be difficulties in connection with some of them, for Vinh and Thanh-hoa were near the 17th Parallel and subject to constant bombing, which meant that it was not always possible to get through to them.

Ilya and I then began explaining to him that we had not come to Vietnam for a rest-cure and that we were well aware what war involved; both of us had been through the siege of Leningrad.

By this time we had reached the devastated suburbs of Hanoi. So here was the capital: the





The road from Haiphong to Hanoi

first thing that struck us was the amount of trees and greenery everywhere.

We were to stay in Hanoi's central hotel, the Unity (*Thống Nhất*), which had formerly been known as the Métropole. The first thing we were shown was the bomb shelter in the hotel's inner courtyard. The entrance to it was surrounded by roses and dahlias.

There was a good number of foreigners at the hotel. A Japanese film-team had come to shoot a documentary on Vietnam and even walked about the hotel in steel helmets. Then there was

a delegation from the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and the Polish writer Monika Warmenska. There were also various French and British delegations. The whole world's attention is riveted to Vietnam. Dozens of countries and all kinds of international committees and solidarity associations send their representatives to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam so as to receive eye witness accounts of American atrocities and bring them to the notice of all the peoples of the world.

THE CITY OF THE FLYING DRAGON

Runned suburbs of Hanou



Life in Hanoi gets off to an early start. By six o'clock the streets are chock-a-block with bicycles. The bicycle is the universal means of transport for old people, women, children and soldiers. Most of the cyclists wear helmets, topees and wide straw hats all complete with a roof of leafy twigs. Many of them have carbines slung across their shoulders and sacks balanced on their luggage-racks. Desperate hooting can be heard from the cars trying to wind their way through the sea of cyclists. I found it incredible that they managed to move forward without knocking anybody off. All the streets were lined with thick-walled concrete wells, literally at every step, which served as individual bomb shelters in case of surprise air-raids. Anti-aircraft machine-guns could be seen on the roofs of many buildings. Improvised bazaars had been set up at crossroads in the centre of the town where a few dozen traders could be seen selling vegetables, bananas, scones and fish. There were even flowers on sale. Countless bunches of flowers, above all gladioli their favourites, were being sold everywhere on the street since the central market was closed due to American air-raids.

One of the first things we did was to take a walk to the Lake of the Reclaimed Sword. We went alone without a guide and lost our way a little, something that is highly to be recommended when exploring an unfamiliar city. On this particular occasion it meant that we came across an exquisite pagoda surrounded by trees in a most picturesque quarter of the city. It took some time to find out what it was called, till we found a Vietnamese who had a smattering of Russian and was able to tell us that it was the Pagoda of the Two Sisters which had been erected in commemoration of a victorious uprising against Chinese rule several centuries before.

The uprising had been led by two sisters, the wives of Vietnamese commanders killed in battle.

A few days later we had a chance to look at the pagoda's interior. After long requests and persuasion we were eventually admitted. It took us a long time to win over a hunchbacked old woman at the door who viewed us at first with considerable suspicion but eventually opened up for us. A few curved rays of sunlight filtered into the building from somewhere very high up and stone statues of men arrayed in rich and colourful costume looked down at us forbiddingly in the semi-darkness. At first we thought that they must be some kind of divinities but then realised that the statues represented the military commanders who had led the insurgent people in their struggle against the Chinese rulers. At the feet of an enormous Buddha coils of smoke wound their way slowly heavier wards from censers and the heavy rich smell of incense filled the whole pagoda. There was a good deal of ornamental stonework, most of the carved faces wore stern expressions and were absorbed in the pursuit of passions that were far from celestial, on the contrary unmistakably of this world. Rich gifts covered the dais in front of the statue of Buddha. An intricate design which gleamed dimly with burnished gold lined the black walls and arches and there were ornamental inscriptions everywhere.

The Vietnamese people's struggle against centuries of Chinese rule occupies an important place in their history. From the time of the foundation of the first dynasties in Tonkin China ruled over the eastern part of Indochina for a thousand years right up to 968 AD. Both Cochinchina, as the Chinese rulers referred to the south of Vietnam, and Annam, the central part of the country, were subjected to Chinese

domination. Then at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century French missionaries started to infiltrate Indochina. In the wake of the Catholic priests came French troops and the ships of the French colonisers. In 1882 they bombarded Hanoi, but the city's freedom-loving people staunchly defended their liberty. "There is no force which can compel us to become slaves. In the course of our history over thousands of years our nation has always distinguished itself by its tenacity and unshakable resolution, time and again it has defeated and put to rout aggressors much more powerful than itself," reads part of the declaration addressed by the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front to all their fellow countrymen.

It was hot and stuffy in Hanoi. The temperature was in the thirties Centigrade, and the humidity was incredible. That first morning I was amazed to find that some mould had appeared on my coat. The sky was covered with low, grey clouds but this delighted the inhabitants of the city because it meant that there would be no bombing.

While in the capital we also visited the Môt Côt Pagoda (Pagoda on a Pillar), an impressive edifice dating from 1049. It has come to be regarded as the symbol of Hanoi. The square building with a roof of red tiles rests on an enormous pillar which rises up out of an ornamental lake. On the pinnacle of its roof there is a carving of intricate design representing the sun and some kind of beasts. The four corners of the roof taper into elegant points reaching skywards. The pagoda is supported on several wooden blocks and it is surrounded on all sides by coconut palms and banana and banyan trees. There were few people to be seen round about.

The garden of the Temple of Literature was also more or less deserted. The building itself was locked, but we caught a glimpse of the temple's inner courtyard through the grille of the gate. The courtyard was covered with a carpet of yellow leaves, we made our way through it admiring the graceful lines of the buildings we passed on our way. The stone gateway of the temple itself was particularly impressive. It formed a whole pagoda in itself, once again gracefully tapering heavenwards. Slabs of stone curving on top rested on the shells of giant stone tortoises whose heads were also raised heavenwards. Inscriptions and dates had been carved into the slabs of stone. All the slabs were of different sizes and later we learnt that they had been set up to honour outstanding Vietnamese poets. The inscriptions on the stone slabs were some of their finest poems. The more talented the poet, the larger the slab bearing his verse and the larger the tortoise supporting the slab.

One of the rows of tortoises supporting the stone slabs was almost half hidden by a protective wall of bricks. The DRV government was taking care to see that the priceless treasures of the people's ancient cultural heritage were not razed to the ground by barbaric American bombing raids.

Many a generation of outstanding Vietnamese poets was to study the art of verse in the Temple of Literature. Poetry has always held a special place in Vietnamese hearts, while the country's poets for their part have striven to remain close to the people and learn from it. The most familiar symbols to be found in Vietnamese poetry are the stork which symbolises happiness, the fish and the dragon which symbolise good repute, the lotus-flower which symbolises beauty and the tortoise which symbolises



Girls from Hanoi



In the old city

immortality. It was not merely a coincidence that Hanoi, which became the capital in the eleventh century, was given the name of Thăng Long or Flying Dragon, the city of good repute. And legend links the ancient giant tortoises with the famous sword which enabled the national hero fisherman Lôi to free the country from the Chinese invaders. Legend has it that the sword now lies on the bed of the Lake of the Reclaimed Sword.

One of the most ancient features of Vietnamese lyrical poetry is the evocation of the "Beloved from the South". It goes without saying that the present situation has resurrected this custom giving it a particularly poignant relevance.

In order to understand a foreign people and its real heart, it is imperative to discover its traditions and national customs, to acquaint oneself with its songs and legends and art forms.

This is the only possible way, the only one which reaps results.

When we were just about to leave the shady garden of the Temple of Literature a group of Vietnamese officers walked in. They walked

round the garden looking at the pagoda and reading the poems carved on the stone slabs; they stacked their submachine-guns together and brought out a theodolite

New buildings in Hanoi



I was struck by the monstrous incongruity of the breath-taking splendour of the temple buildings, the gentle beauty of the Vietnamese landscape and the responsive kindness of the people on the one hand, and the constant and oppressive threat of annihilation hanging over the country on the other.

When we returned to the hotel Le Thanh was waiting for us with a thickset young man. We were introduced and learnt that the lad's name was Khai and that he was on the staff of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Together with Le Thanh he was to accompany us on our travels as translator. Khai had graduated from Moscow University and had a fluent command of Russian.

We also paid a visit to the Museum of the Vietnamese Revolution, which was no distance from our hotel. We spent several hours making a study of Vietnam's past, and were able to find a detailed account of the Vietnamese uprising against the Chinese invaders that was led by the two sisters, in whose honour the Pagoda of the Two Sisters had been erected.

There was a special section of the museum

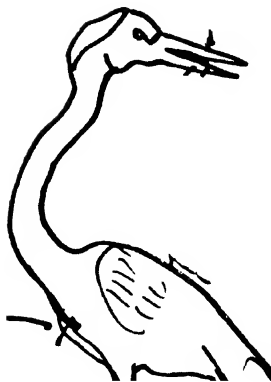


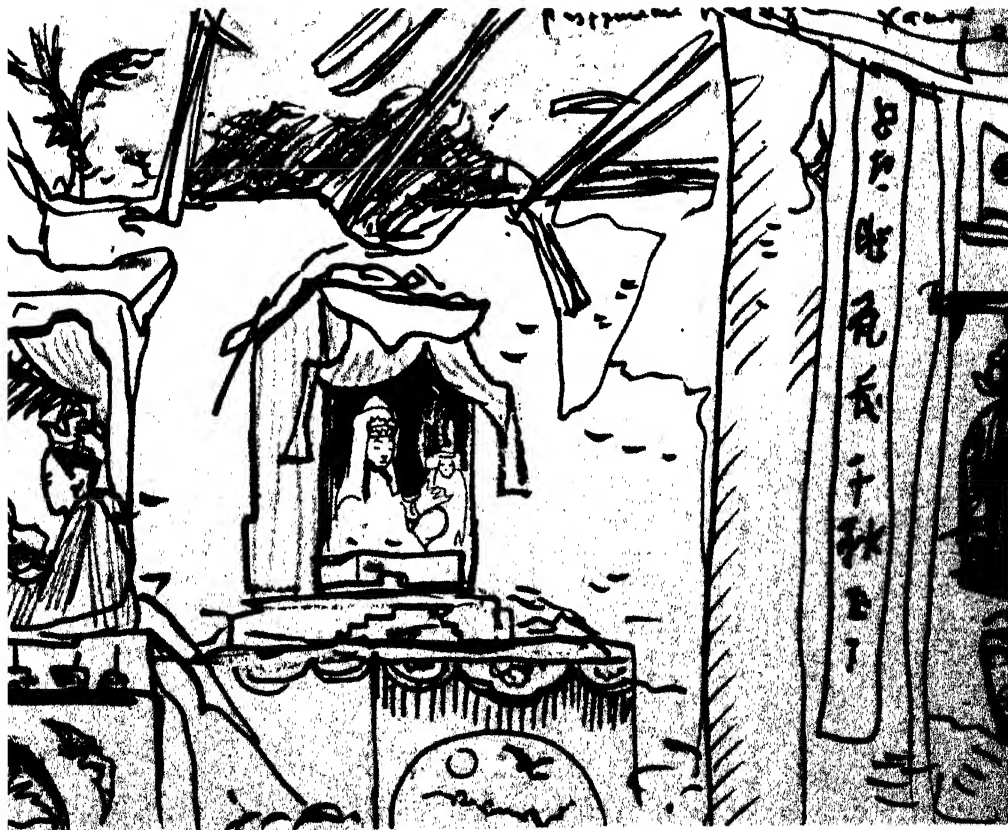




Statues in the Temple of
the Two Sisters

devoted to Ho Chi Minh. Here we were able to see photographs of the hut in the woods and the mountain cave where he went into hiding during the years when he had to go underground.





A ruined pagoda in Hanoi

The museum also contained the red flag which was first hoisted in honour of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Our attention was also caught by a large photo dated 1948 showing a group of men sitting round in a circle in dense jungle - the first Congress of Vietnamese Writers.

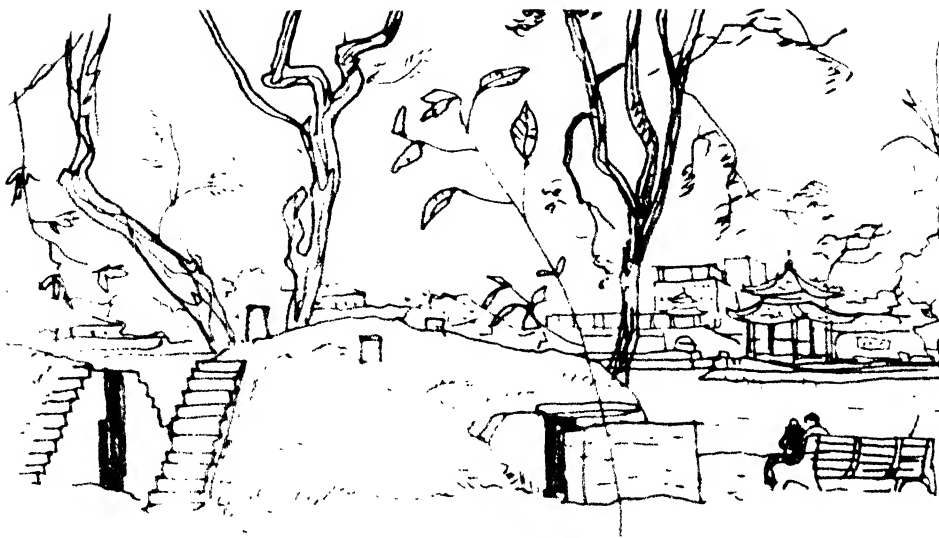
In one of the exhibition halls we came across some large lacquers depicting the resistance put up by the Vietnamese in defiance of the Chinese invaders. They had been executed with impeccable skill. While we were admiring the talent of the ancient masters, a middle-aged man with an impressive, intellectual face came up to us. There was something about him which bespoke the artist. Perhaps it was the very long raven-black hair or his clothes which differed somewhat from the military style dress worn by almost all Vietnamese, men and women alike.

"*Lac Sĩ* - are you Soviet?" he asked us.

We nodded and in the ensuing conversation it emerged that he actually was an artist. He told us his name--Mai Văn Hiến and we also learnt that he was on the board of the Union of Vietnamese Artists.



Hanoi 29/10



Shelters on the shore of the Lake of the Reclaimed
Sword

"Haven't you been to the Spring Exhibition?" he asked. "It was opened quite recently at the Museum of Fine Arts. Perhaps our friends from the Soviet Union would like to come and have a look round?" Mai Văn Hiến suggested.

We, of course, were keen to see recent works by contemporary Vietnamese artists and agreed when and where we should meet Hiến forthwith.

Women hawkers on the streets
of the city



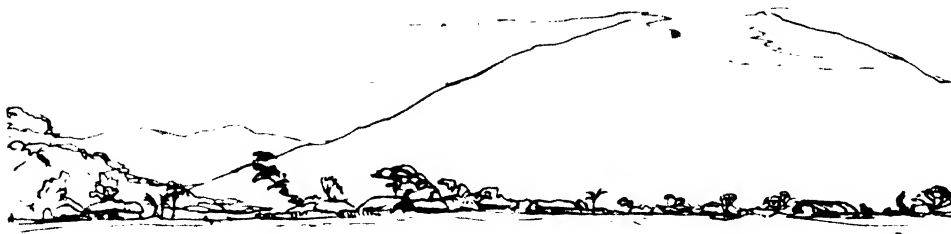
A GALLANT HEROINE

Not long after our arrival in the capital Le Thanh telephoned to say that there was a chance for us to meet one of the woman guerillas from South Vietnam. She had only just come out of hospital after a long course of treatment.

Soon after our conversation there was a knock at the door and Le Thanh came in with a young girl. To me she looked no more than fourteen. She was very shy and it was also evident that she had not yet fully recovered. Tiny beads of sweat kept on breaking out on her forehead. Her name was Ngô Thi Tuât and a scar on her lip

gave her smile a sad twist and a slightly apologetic look. Her big brown eyes had an expression of overwhelming sadness about them and all this in a young girl of seventeen. At that age the eyes of most young girls of our planet are sparkling with *joue de vivre* and love, while Tuât's eyes were the tired eyes of someone who had been through a great deal.

Iva asked her to pose for a portrait and Tuât nodded in consent. I took a few photographs and then while Glazunov was working I listened to the amazing story of the young girl three times



Ngô Thị Tuát, a partisan from South Vietnam

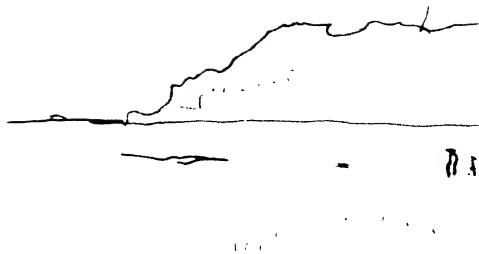


granted the title of "Heroine" which is only conferred by the South Vietnam National Liberation Front on a woman who has killed three American soldiers in the course of a single battle. Tuât had also been awarded the National Front's highest order, the Liberation Order, first class.

I took down Tuât's story almost word for word.

Nimble-footed, musical little Tuât who came from a coastal village in South Vietnam had only had friends up to the age of thirteen. Enemies appeared in her life when the Americans started building one of their main bases, the Trulai airfield, not far from her house. Rice-fields and coconut groves disappeared to make way for a three mile concrete runway. Soon planes were constantly roaring down to that part of the coast as transport aircraft brought in US marines and soldiers of the Blue Dragon Division from South Korea.

The thick barbed-wire fences which surrounded the airfield gradually swallowed up



more and more of the tiny peasant plots, pastureland and coconut groves. The US base grew larger and larger as it devoured the surrounding territory, like an insatiable monster. Three squadrons of jet planes were eventually stationed there and fifteen thousand soldiers. The small village where Tuât lived was little more than a mile from the runway of Trulai airfield, and it was the inhabitants of that village that were to be the first victims of the invaders from overseas.

Tuât was very attached to her native village situated in the picturesque rolling hills. She loved the sandy spits jutting out into the sea, the broad waters of the Tra Bong River and the whimsical silhouettes of the distant mountains, that were always swathed in clouds. Yet by this time the hills were bristling with ack-ack guns and the beaches were fenced off with barbed wire.

Tuât loved to sing as she worked in the rice-fields but now the roar of planes overhead drowned the sound of all songs.

One day when Tuât came home from the rice-fields she found her mother in tears. An hour before the Americans had appeared with some traitors from among the local population



and taken away Tuât's father. A few days later Tuât found out that her father had been arrested on the grounds that he had fought against the French. The Americans felt uneasy having freedom fighters under their nose. Later an emaciated and tortured member of a local guerilla force, who kept clutching at his chest that was wracked with pain, told the young girl that her

father had died in captivity as a result of torture. The tortures had been inhuman to the last degree. He had been forced to drink from a bucket of water mixed with soap and pepper. His captors had also kicked him in the stomach. The man who brought Tuât news of her father's fate had spent some time in the same cell as her father but had later succeeded in escaping.

According to that escaped prisoner Tuât's father had been nothing but a bag of skin and bones by the end, bruised all over from head to foot.

Yet despite the Americans' efforts to arrest all "suspicious" local inhabitants, gradually guerillas became active in the neighbourhood of the Trukai airfield. They started blowing up jeeps carrying American officers and soldiers and launched surprise mortar attacks against the airfield itself. The Americans in response to this activity started systematically "combing" the area and it was in the course of one of these punitive operations that Tuât's mother was killed while working in the rice-fields.

"What was there left for me to do," said Tuât with a sad sigh. Her memories were very bitter and she found it difficult to talk of her past. "I tried to join the guerillas and inevitably it took me rather a long time to make contact with them. At that period there were no girls among them at all and in the Trukai base area I was the first. When I found some of the local guerillas they laughed on hearing my request, because I was so small."

Tuât is still a small strip of a girl. Only after taking a really close look at her face is it possible to believe she is seventeen.

It was a long time before the men agreed to let her join the guerilla detachment but they would not let her carry a rifle. She was used for reconnaissance work and to get hold of food supplies.

"I kept on begging them to let me have a rifle," Tuât told us. "When they gave me one I only used it for a day. I managed to kill an American with it and after that used his sub-machine-gun. The Americans intimidated us very much in those days. They seemed so enormous and they were so well armed."

stretched out her arms to indicate how big they were. "We used to wonder whether a single bullet was enough to polish off an American, as in the case of a traitor or one of those vermin serving in Pac Chung Hô's forces.

"When they eventually gave me a rifle I persuaded the guerillas to take me with them on a mission. We laid an ambush for some Americans and when they were within easy range we opened fire.

"They started falling like ninepins, one after the other. The wounded men were bellowing like slaughtered cattle. One hardly ever hears a Vietnamese groan, even those from the southern punitive detachments. The first thing I did when it was all over was to take the submachine-gun that had belonged to 'mine'. It was much easier to carry than a rifle. That day was a great occasion for us. I said to the others: 'The Americans' size makes them easier targets'. From then on no one in the detachment was afraid of them, and they were also more willing to take on girls after that. Soon there was a whole platoon of us and I was put in command."

Young Tuât and the other girls were sent off to help wage the "political struggle".

Once they set an ambush for the enemy. The guerillas were few and far between and decided to fire only at close range. After two or three volleys the men made their way back into the jungle; then the girls hid the weapons in a nearby village and went out to face the enemy. Those who were plundering the villages the girls tried to fill with shame for their treachery pulling at their uniforms in an attempt to stop them, sometimes they would resort to tears and threats. The wounded were an easier target for persuasion though; they were afraid that they would be left behind in the villages and that the guerillas would come after night fell.



In the field



947 Pan-Kyu.

"Yes, there are a lot of guerillas in the area," the girls used to impress on them to intimidate the men, and then they would ask them outright why they had started fighting against their fellow-countrymen on the side of the Americans.

As a rule the answer was that they had been forced to, at which the girls would ask: "Don't you want to go back home, to your families?"

"Yes, but how? The guerillas will finish us off." Fear was obviously the constant companion of these men as they harassed the lives of peaceful civilians.

Then came the most dangerous moment for the girls, when they had to come out into the open. Once they had gone so far there was no turning back, but it was impossible to say what would be the outcome of the battle of words they had embarked on.

"We can help you," they would go on, "put you in contact with the National Liberation Front." After that they dictated to the wounded men the text of the following written vow:

"I, so-and-so, ask the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army to forgive me my crimes against my people, which I committed not of my own will but under pressure from the Americans. I ask to be allowed to go free so that I may work for the good of my people."

The girls succeeded in persuading many of the men to lay down their arms there and then.

Soon Tuât became famous for her courage, which was even a source of envy to many men. The young girl's suffering and bereavement which had struck at such a tender age, would not let her rest. The hatred for those who had killed her parents gave untold strength to the frail slip of a girl, enabling her to cover enormous distances through the jungle and the mountains, to lie in wait for the enemy for hours on

end and make her way right into the enemy's lair to carry out vital reconnaissance work.

The next blow that befell Tuât was the death of her elder brother who was also with the guerillas. He met his death after being surrounded by South Korean soldiers: he waited till they were at close range and then exploded the grenade strapped to his chest.

There was no other alternative open to Tuât apart from struggle in the name of her people, a life-and-death struggle for as long as she had a single bullet left, until the very last of the invaders was chased from the land of her fathers, her native shores. So Tuât went on fighting, while girls of her age in other countries were going to school, learning to dance and sing and enjoy all the rich experiences life has to offer. This young girl from Vietnam meanwhile had no time to sit down and read textbooks or attend school.

Tuât had been born amidst fighting. Her father, a brave fisherman, had been fighting against the French at the time, and war was also the constant companion of her childhood years. Tuât's own first-hand experience of war was the sequel to that war-time childhood.

Although she had still not recovered from her most recent wounds as she sat and talked with us and was far from well, we knew that all too soon she would be taking up the struggle once more. The story of the young girl came to symbolise for me the destiny of her people as a whole, that courageous people which will never abandon the struggle until freedom is theirs.

Tuât's last battle had been a grim one, full-scale combat with tanks, helicopters and marines to contend with.

The guerillas had only been able to muster a few platoons and were facing amphibian tanks which were being disembarked straight from

American warships, while sixty helicopters loaded with enemy troops were closing in on the battle area.

"I realised right away that we would probably not come out alive," Tuât told us. "I think they even used fighter planes, but I can't be sure now, there was so much noise and shooting going on. We were lying hidden in bushes on the slope of a big hill with tanks coming at us, making havoc of the rice-fields as they went. Women and children came running out of the village and threw themselves down in those fields right in front of the tanks, desperate to save something of their crops. The Americans stopped in their tracks except for one tank which veered off to the side to loop round them. The group of guerillas with whom I was lying in wait in the bushes, at the edge of the road, set it on fire. The din was frenzied! The enemy went on shelling one and the same spot for a whole hour at a stretch. Then four helicopters landed, but one of the few remaining guerillas fired straight at one of the helicopters. Then many more helicopters started landing, there was no end to them . . . Lots of Americans in jeeps went past and I kept shooting at them all the time. I set one of the jeeps on fire and as the men jumped out we managed to hit down some of them. I felt no urge to spare them, or myself for that matter. The shooting and bombing went on for hours: helicopters were hovering overhead only just keeping clear of the palm-trees, whipping up the dust and the sand. Sand kept on getting in the barrels of our guns making it impossible to fire. We tried to keep the sand off with pieces of rag. Several helicopters were evidently brought down—there were tremendous explosions nearby.

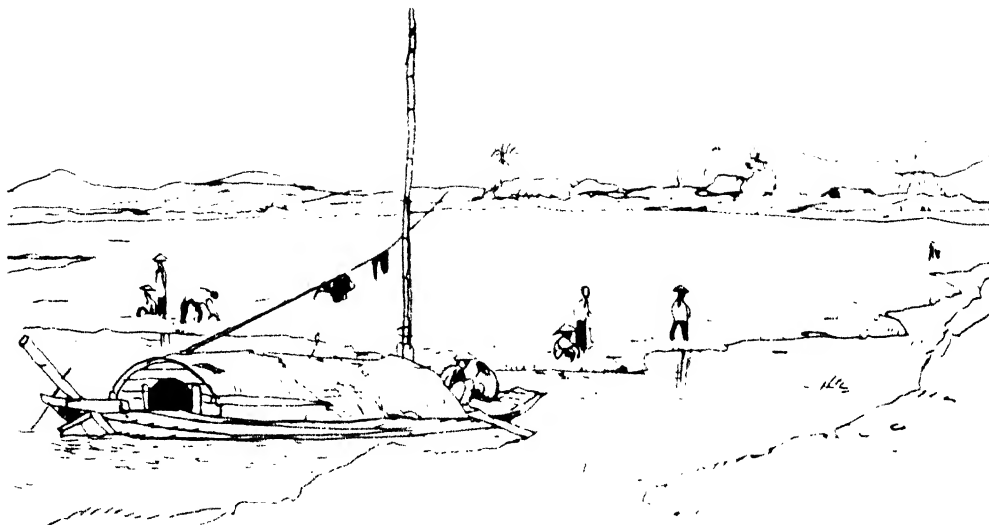
"Then came the order from our commander for us to force our way out, for the men to make

for the jungle and the girls to go and carry out political work in the village where the enemy had begun setting the village huts on fire.

"We hid our guns but soon realised there was nothing we could usefully do in the village—everything was ablaze. We went down to the river and the rest of the girls started to make their way across, while I and two others remained behind to give them cover. Everything would probably have been all right, but just as we were pushing off from the bank a little boy came running out of the burning village. He was crying and we shouted to him to take cover, but he went on running in our direction. He held us up for a few minutes and when our boat was in midstream Americans appeared on both sides of the river. They started shooting and the girls dived into the water. A shell hit our boat and killed the little boy. I was wounded in the arm and leg and started sinking after losing consciousness. The next thing I knew I was being dragged ashore by an American pulling me along by my hair. I only wanted one thing—to die there and then . . ."

The Americans handed Tuât over to the soldiers from the punitive troops and for five days she was beaten and tortured. Even when a soldier knocked her teeth out with his heavy boots they failed to get a single word out of little Tuât.

Later fellow guerillas helped her to escape from the prison hospital after she managed to send them a note. On the occasion of a religious festival, when the soldiers guarding the hospital were all drunk, some guerillas appeared. There were women among them, disguised as nurses, who led Tuât out of her ward. They told the sentry on guard that they were taking her to have some injections and carried her out on their shoulders. At the hospital gate they were stopped



again by some half-drunk guards who asked why they were taking Tuât out of the hospital. One of the women answered, "American orders. They accuse us of laying on charity for the guerillas, saying that they have enough wounded on their hands as it is, and that this girl might just as well kick it in prison."

When the enemy discovered what had happened it was too late. By then the guerillas had taken Tuât to a liberated area and from there she was sent to Hanoi for treatment. A thorough search was made for the girl; a special detachment was sent to her village where they turned everything upside down. Tuât's cousin said to the traitors: "You've probably killed her and are now just covering up your tracks."

That was the end of Tuât's story. She was feeling feverish. We noticed her take out a handkerchief and turn her head away. There were tears glistening in her eyes . . .

By this time Glazunov's sketch was ready. It showed a grave face, constantly on the alert, a face framed by two black plaits—the little heroine with the brave heart.

As we said good-bye, Tuât put out her hand to touch my camera and asked if it was Soviet. When I told her it was, she nodded approvingly and said: "*Tôt lam* Splendid."

She told us that she had only learnt a short while before what photos were and then after a pause she added in her quiet little voice, "Soviet rockets are very fine."

ART WITH A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY

Actors from Hanoi's City Theatre



Our trip to Zone IV, to the provinces of Thanh-hoa and Ngan, which lie to the south of the capital, had to be put off. Route No. 1 which leads there was under constant attack from American bombers. None of our persuasion tactics moved Thanh, who merely kept reminding us: "There is a war on and transportation is difficult." So there was nothing for us to do but wait, and meanwhile we had a chance to get to know Hanoi better.

One evening we went to the town's main theatre. Almost all the plays and concerts due to be put on there had been cancelled because of the bombing. The municipal authorities always went out of their way to avoid unnecessary concentrations of people and anyway most of the time the theatre's actors and musicians were travelling round the country laying on entertainment for the troops. However out of the blue a large-scale concert was suddenly put on.

What we saw and heard on the stage made a deep impression. In Moscow I had seldom had the chance to see visiting Vietnamese artists and even on those rare occasions it had been a question of isolated items. This time though we were given an eye-opening introduction to traditional Vietnamese art in a concert lasting several hours. We were confronted with a vivid world of music and dance, which at first to the unaccustomed eye and ear seemed austere in melody and form, a world in which emotions appeared to be kept beneath the surface. These first impressions of the inexperienced beholder were however soon to be swept away! In the outward restraint of the melodies and the chiselled lines of the choreography, I soon sensed undercurrents of deep emotion and feeling. The whole of the programme was devoted to the theme of the struggle against the American



aggressors that gallant people is waging—the one act ballet, the songs, the dances of the lesser peoples living within the Republic, and the musical items. There was one exception, a ballet etude devoted to the love of a beautiful girl for a brave hunter, who kills a monster so as to rescue his beloved. Yet even this traditional dance told of goodness and beauty vanquishing evil.



As I sat in the theatre watching the actors and listening to the beautiful songs I could not help but be impressed by the great endeavour of the Vietnamese people to defend their liberty and independence and defeat the enemy. Art also had its part to play in this struggle. Earlier that day we had visited a factory where we had talked to workers, young and old, men and women, listening to their stories and watching them at the bench or smelting steel, and I had felt that all those people had set themselves a common aim, that they were concerned with one thing and one thing only—to achieve victory in their struggle. I was aware of this in the theatre as well. This was all the more remarkable when one recalls that the Vietnamese people have been fighting not one year or two, or for decades. The history of the Vietnamese people's fight to defend their independence and national sovereignty stretches back over whole centuries to be exact, if one retraces Vietnamese history to the time of Chinese rule, followed by the era of French colonialism. The tragedy of a whole generation which was born into this fighting, grew up in it and now as adults cannot look back to any memories of peace-time defies imagination. This generation's tragedy is great, but its heroism is no less great.

This thought also reminded me of an article written by the outstanding Russian artist Nikolai Roerich in 1936 when he was in the small town of Urusvati in the Himalayas. The article written by that man of generous heart and spirit is entitled "Defence" and contains the following passage:

"It is man's duty to defend his Homeland. In the same way that men defend the honour of their mother and father, so they dedicate experience and knowledge to the defence of their homeland. *Casual indifference towards*

one's native land betrays first and foremost a lack of culture . . . (My italics—S.V.)

"In defending his Homeland a man defends his own dignity, and the defence of the Homeland serves to uphold its culture. The concept of Homeland is something which shines out through all the drab routine of everyday life, enhancing it and endowing it with significance. He who recognises that concept, its indestructible splendour, can be regarded as a true defender of his country's cultural heritage. Love for mankind as a whole, and for the Homeland fosters in the young hearts a pure, noble aspiration to accomplish great things. This aspiration stimulates action, progress, and constructive achievement.

"All your spiritual treasures, great Homeland, all your ineffable beauty, the infinity of all your wide-open spaces and mountain-tops—these we shall always defend."

May it not well be the awareness of this simple yet noble truth which also gives the Vietnamese soldier the strength to go on fighting in the jungle for years on end, to endure terrible hardship and privation, without seeing his family and often even ignorant of its fate? Was it not this knowledge which helped a young slip of a Vietnamese girl to turn her back on the recreations and pastimes of other boys and girls of her own age and spend her evenings manning an anti-aircraft gun or rebuilding roads torn to pieces by enemy bombs after a heavy day's work in a factory? Yes, it is precisely this awareness of the indestructible splendour of the concept—Homeland—a concept enhanced many times over when a man's Homeland is a socialist one . . .

The melodies played by an orchestra of one of the mountain peoples of Vietnam at that concert were haunting and most unusual. It was a truly



virtuoso performance. All the instruments in that particular orchestra were made of bamboo. Unfortunately I was unable to record the names of the instruments; when Le Thanh went to speak to the musicians during the interval to find out, he was unable to translate them.

The Hanoi symphony orchestra looked as imposing as symphony orchestras anywhere else. We were later to learn that the conductor and many members of the orchestra had studied music in the Soviet Union.

ALL IN THE NAME OF VICTORY ...

A furnace named after Nguyễn Văn Trỗi, one of the country's national heroes, goes on smelting in all conditions



We were engaged in a leisurely conversation with the director of the Hanoi Engineering Works, Vo Thang Cong, in his office. Comrade Cong was telling us how the works had been built with Soviet assistance and how Soviet engineers had helped his staff learn to master the equipment. At first the director talked to us in a very calm voice, turning as he did so from time to time to the Secretary of the local youth organisation Comrade Doan, asking: "That was how things were, wasn't it, Comrade Secretary?" He became gradually more and more restless however, jumping up from his seat showing us drawings, reeling off figures and making expansive gestures. All of a sudden he paused a moment, smiled and said: "Oh, you can't describe the works! You must come and see things for yourself!"

On the way there Comrade Cong told us something about his own background. He was forty years old and under the French he had worked at a factory in Saigon. Later he had joined the Resistance. At Hanoi he had subsequently worked his way right up from worker to work-team leader, shop-foreman and head engineer. He had also spent eighteen months in the USSR, in Kuibyshev, studying Soviet industrial techniques. He had only finally qualified as an engineer three years before our visit to the country.

As we talked we made our way along a wide path between some of the works buildings and I called attention to the fact that on many of the trees there were small metal discs bearing Russian names such as Kuznetsov and Meshcheryakov.

"The trees were planted by Soviet industrial experts when they were working at our works," explained the director. "It's a nice way to remember them," he said with a smile. "The

most important monument to their memory though is the works itself. Our Russian friends from Krasnodar gave us invaluable help."

It was clear from what the director had to say that economic collaboration with the Soviet Union has developed on a wide scale in Vietnam and extensive use has been made of Soviet industrial know-how. A socialist emulation campaign was then in progress at the works in honour of the crews of the Soviet spacecraft "Vostok" and "Vostok-2".

Comrade Cong also told us about another interesting campaign initiated by the workers and engineers. They had taken it upon themselves to design, equip and train personnel for a new engineering factory built on the same lines as their own. After their people's victory the factory would be presented to the youth of Saigon. It should be noted that all this is being done after working hours, at the expense of the staff's free time.

This reflected the tremendous faith these men and women had in a brighter future, their confidence in their ultimate victory which enabled them to go on working all-out, despite the constant menace of air-raids and all manner of privations, and to think about the glorious day when at last every sod of Vietnamese soil would once again be free and peace-time construction could get underway throughout the land. Every Vietnamese thinks of Vietnam as one. Regardless of whether people live in the north or the south each Vietnamese thinks of them all as his fellow-countrymen. The north and the south together make up his Homeland. The only difference is that one part of that Homeland is oppressed by foreign invaders, and that part accounts for half the free country. The independent socialist north is a source of

both material and moral support for the men and women living in the south. In North Vietnam every citizen sees himself as playing a distinct role in the war effort that is deciding the fate of the whole country and is resolved to carry out all the obligations which that function involves. One of the obligations he takes upon himself is participation in the work to facilitate the industrial development of the south after it has been liberated. It was precisely this unity of the whole Vietnamese people which the late President Ho Chi Minh stressed in a conversation with the British journalist Felix Green.

'Vietnam is a single entity, there is only one Vietnamese nation. The people of North Vietnam supports with all its heart and strength the patriotic struggle which its fellow-countrymen in the south, bound to it by blood ties, are waging against the Americans. At the same time the people of South Vietnam is fighting with all its heart and strength to help to defend the north of their native land.'

The works we were touring looked very up-to-date. The director took us into the metal-burgical shop which for several years has held the title 'Workshop of Socialist Labour'. It contained a number of electric furnaces. It was with especial pride that Comrade Cong introduced me to the young lads who operated the furnace named after Nguyen Van Tra, one of Vietnam's national heroes who perished at the hands of the Saigon butchers. While we were talking to the workers, trying to shout over the roar of the furnace, a young lad came up to us, introducing himself as Vu Dai, the Secretary of the Union of Working Youth in that particular shop. He went on to tell us that the furnace we were standing next to had something special about it, namely, that regardless of what might be happening in the town outside it had to go

on working, even if bombs started falling on the works compound itself!

One of the electricians operating that particular furnace was a dainty young girl with enormous eyes and long dark plaits. Her name was Nguyệt which means Moon in Vietnamese. She was wearing an arm-band with a red cross on it and over her shoulder she carried a bag containing a first-aid kit. It emerged that she was an orderly in one of the detachments of the People's Volunteer Corps. Nguyệt told us that when she came to Hanoi she had had no schooling, combining studies and work had been a hard task but now all the main difficulties were behind her.

Indeed war has brought a heavy lot to the women of Vietnam. Most of the men are away fighting in the Army and it is the women who have had to take their places out in the fields and in the factories. At that particular works women already accounted for about a third of the working force. Their overall level of education was still lower than that of the men. A great deal was being demanded of them and large numbers were taking evening courses so as to improve their qualifications. A special technical school and institute were attached to that factory to provide the required tuition in the evenings.

All-out efforts were being made to reorganise life along new socialist lines, we were informed by the director. The young people were constantly being encouraged to be tidy and modest in their dress. Teenage boys who followed extravagant or flamboyant fashions were immediately criticised at public meetings.

Vu Dai told us which were the achievements that secured the workers of the People's Volunteer Corps detachment the title "Warrior Determined to Win Through". To qualify for that distinction

three main conditions had to be fulfilled: the first was that members of the detachment should all be in first-class physical shape, training regularly all the time; secondly, they had to display courage and be the first to take up their places manning the anti-aircraft guns as soon as the air-raid warnings started up; in the third place, it was required of them that they overfulfil their work quotas. As can be seen from the above it was not a title that was won easily. Only 20% of the workers in that particular detachment of the People's Volunteer Corps had qualified for it.

While Glazunov was drawing in the shop the director and I walked round the works compound. Comrade Gong had clearly put his heart and soul into the works he was running. He could talk for hours about it and the people who worked there. I was soon to learn, incidentally, that only part of the works was operating on the spot in Hanoi.

After the American aggression had begun the works had started to evacuate. Vital equipment had been dispersed throughout the country, even to the jungle and the hills. Every effort was made to ensure that maximum production specialisation should continue despite the difficult working conditions.

Not far from our hotel we met a young girl from the People's Volunteer Corps with a carbine over her shoulder and wearing a steel helmet encased in green netting. Hya's attention was at once caught by her brave, slightly pock-marked but nevertheless beautiful face.

Her name was Nguyễn Thi Lan and she was nineteen years old. In her left ear she wore a simple gold earring. She had been born in the village of Hai Duong. Her parents worked in a co-operative and she also had five brothers and sisters. Her eldest brother was in the Army and the others were all younger than she was. Lan

herself had had seven years schooling and then joined a volunteer construction brigade. She had not long ago come to Hanoi for the first time. In recognition of her good work she had been sent to the capital to attend courses to improve her qualifications. The black ink stain on her green trousers made it easy to guess that a good part of her time was spent studying. Lan was a very shy girl and she kept blushing and showing signs of acute embarrassment. She talked to us in a quiet voice, her eyes lowered. She had not seen her parents for two years, nor her fiancé, who had been at school with her and was now a soldier defending the port of Haiphong. From his letters she had learnt that he had been wounded several times.

"Are you a good marksman?" I asked.

Lan answered in a firm voice: "Yes!"

As always Hya was going about his work quickly and within an hour his ink portrait was complete. Lan took a look at his work, exclaimed in delight and blushed more than ever. It obviously appealed to her. We gave her a small souvenir casket and some postcards of Moscow to remember us by.

"Oh, Moscow!" Lan said in tones of awe. "I'd love to go there so much. I hope that after our victory . . ."

As we said good-bye, I asked her: "Lan, what is your most cherished wish?"

This question took Lan aback but finally she found her bearings again and said quietly, "While the war is on it is to carry out highly responsible tasks in the defence of my Homeland. Then I want to complete my studies . . . and then . . . and then," she gave a laugh and went on, "I haven't really thought."

Finally she made up her mind and came out with, "I want to work as a tractor mechanic in my village back home."



"Warriors Determined
to Win Through" from
the People's Volunteer
Corps detachment



THE FATE OF HIỀN THE ARTIST

The next morning we planned to visit the Spring Art Exhibition. However we had only just gone back to our rooms after breakfast, when the air raid sirens started up. Someone began drumming at the door and one of the maids came in to ask us to go downstairs. We tried to talk our way out of it, but as if from nowhere, Lê Thanh suddenly appeared and we knew that nothing would move him! We went down, following the arrows on the staircase which pointed the way. Some of the Vietnamese hotel staff in steel helmets dashed upstairs. They were probably going to man the machine-guns which were set up on the hotel roof.

By this time there was a crowd of people at the entrance to the bomb-shelter. The Japanese film-crew looked most forbidding: on their heads they wore large steel helmets of Soviet type and over their shoulders hung ordinary cameras,

ciné-cameras and tape-recorders. A tense silence hung in the air. No one was talking and all eyes were glued to the sky; all that could be heard for the next ten minutes was the chirping of birds in the thick foliage of the nearby trees. Suddenly a thunderous din rent the sky and two low-flying Phantoms skimmed past. The air was filled with the roar of anti-aircraft guns. A few moments later everyone suddenly started talking excitedly and pointing to the sky. Sure enough we could see a plane that had just been shot down, leaving a thick trail of smoke in its wake as it dived earthwards.

Five minutes later some MIGs flew overhead, and then the all-clear rang out: the same siren as before faded slowly into silence.

Mai Van Hiền was waiting for us at the Museum of Fine Arts as arranged. The white two-storey building of the museum was hidden



The Red River

in the shade of banyan trees: they are enormous trees with wide spreading branches and roots which jut straight out of their trunks and grow down into the earth. It was a quiet, cool spot that seemed to have remained untouched by the war, until one noticed small details like the humps made by the bomb-shelters in the ground, then the trenches and the arrows on the wall pointing which way people should go in case of an air-raid.

So we went to see the Spring Exhibition in Hanoi, the city at war, the first exhibition of its kind to have been held for three years.

Mai Văn Thén told us that most of the museum's exhibits had been evacuated. They were stored in the mountains, in specially prepared premises.

Vietnamese painting is distinguished by an extremely delicate touch, ethereal lines and delicate drawing technique, which echo the soft colours of the landscapes swathed in pale blue haze or light mist lending them a gentle charm all of their own. Although most of the exhibits were on topical themes there were also a few landscapes on display and a good deal of lacquer-work.

Mai showed us a picture by Phan Kế An labelled "Palms". It was the work of a true master and was both vivid and ethereal. It aspired that the artist had taken a post-graduate course in the Soviet Union and his canvas "Evening near Tai Bac" had been included in the Moscow exhibition of works by Vietnamese artists. Another artist represented at the exhibition—Nguyễn Cao Thuong, a native of South Vietnam—had, as we were to learn later, also completed his post-graduate studies in the Soviet Union. We perused his picture entitled "At the Thai Nguyên Construction Site", and then spent a long time admiring a portrait by a certain

Nguyễn Văn Bình. It was of a veteran Resistance fighter with a resolute face, astute eyes and a firm mouth. It was an extremely vivid work, in which the artist had succeeded in conveying those attributes which were typical of the people as a whole—the will to fight and unshakable resolve.

To my mind, the examples of lacquer work provided the clearest expression of the folk traditions peculiar to Vietnamese art. Our attention was caught by a remarkable work by Kim Đức Cuong called "Landscape with Red Roofs" which depicted rice fields, lakes, in the water of which clouds were reflected, dense bamboo groves and small houses with red roofs. In the distance hills were outlined, wrapped in a thin mist. It was difficult to wrest one's eyes from this landscape, so masterly executed. We asked Mai Văn Thén to tell us something about the techniques involved in the lacquering process.

In our jungle there grows a certain tree. Its sap is quite transparent. This sap is collected and then stirred in a bamboo bowl with a bamboo stick for three days and three nights without stopping. It is essential that the stick be of bamboo. If a metal rod or spoon is used the lacquer turns black. The sap of the tree is something many people are highly allergic to, it makes their faces and hands swell and itch. That is the lacquer which artists use in their work with such expert skill."

We went from room to room of the exhibits displayed for the Spring Exhibition. Apart from paintings and lacquer-work there were engravings, wood-carvings, paintings on silk, water-colours and sculpture. Artists of all ages were represented and the works reflected a wide range of styles, techniques and mood. Yet there was one thing the vast majority of the exhibits had in common: they almost all depicted people or

scenes connected with the war against the Americans, or the resistance to the French and Japanese colonisers. There were also some historical canvases to be seen which treated the war against the Chinese invaders who had ruled over the country for many centuries in the past.

After visiting the exhibition we invited Hiên back to our hotel. Glazunov set about drawing him and I sat down nearby to talk to the artist armed with a notebook. Indeed, Hiên's story very definitely proved worth the telling.

When the arrogant Frenchman Jeauchère, former director of Hanoi Art School, was about to take off in the plane that was to carry him away from Vietnam for ever, as the situation in Indo-China had become uncomfortable and dangerous for him, journalists started to clamour round.

"What kind of future does Vietnamese art have before it?" one of them asked the director.

"The Vietnamese will never produce any artists," the Frenchman replied without hesitation. "They will remain what they have always been, mere craftsmen."

The newspapers published this interview with Jeauchère and the following day one of the Hanoi papers came out with a caustic rebuff of the words thrown out by the presumptuous snob. The article was signed by three Vietnamese artists, one of whom was Nguyễn Do Cung who was already well known throughout the country even in those days.

The colonial authorities were not slow in coming up with their "reply". They banned the artists who had signed the letter of protest from all forms of government employment and even forbade them to teach in schools. All that Nguyễn Do Cung had left open to him after that was to give private lessons to promising Vietnamese youngsters. Among them was Mai Văn Hiên,

a swarthy, gifted boy from the south who was later to become one of the DRV's celebrated artists.

Hiên was born in 1923 in the village of Quan Nam at the southernmost tip of Vietnam, known locally as the country's "rice-basket". (The second of these is in North Vietnam, while the central part of the country is referred to as the "yoke for carrying water"—*My Tho*.) His beautiful native valley full of coconut groves, lush tropical vegetation and girt by mountains with their summits for ever shrouded in pale blue mist and the riot of colour made by the spring flowers—all fostered the boy's inclination to paint. He used to devote every free moment he had to drawing. By the time he was fifteen he had banished the idea of any other profession. Artist or nothing! His father who was a junior clerk often had to travel from place to place in search of work. It was during one such journey that Hiên had the good fortune to meet the venerable Nguyễn Do Cung who by that time was already giving private lessons.

The experienced master taught the youth how to prepare lacquer from the remarkable sap of the tree, how to make wood engravings and prints. Most important of all, he taught Hiên to love his native countryside and the people around him, who worked from morn till night in the rice-fields. Nguyễn Do Cung taught him to set store by their wisdom that walks hand-in-hand with modest reticence.

Hiên devoted himself heart and soul to his studies, painting landscapes, one after the other.

His teacher later advised him to enter Hanoi Art School. The odds against Hiên's success were tremendous: only ten pupils from the whole

Artist Mai Văn Hiên



The fringe of the hill jungle

of Indo-China were taken on each year and only three or four of the original ten would be able to see the course out. Material difficulties, the arrogance and snobbism of the European teachers and the threat of expulsion at the slightest hint of free-thinking were only some of the problems that had to be contended with. Yet it was only at that art school that Hiên would get the chance to master the vital techniques of his profession, without which he could never be a true artist. And Hiên succeeded in being accepted at the art school.

The teachers were extremely cautious about introducing their students to the treasure-house of world art. In the main it was French artists



with whom the students were able to acquaint themselves—Corot, Renoir, Gauguin, Matisse. They heard a little about Dutch and Italian painting. German artists were only mentioned *en passant* and Russian painters might as well not have existed. What they were able to find out depended first and foremost on their own aptitude and curiosity. Somehow they managed to get hold of tattered copies of reproductions of Russian paintings from heaven knows where and well-worn editions of Gorky.

While Hien was still a student echoes of the Battle of Stalingrad were to reach Indo-China, at a time when the Communist Party was making ready for the final battle. Ho Chi Minh was to



write at that period: "The torch of Marxist-Leninist teaching and the experience of the Great October Revolution lit us on our way as we advanced along the path of revolution in Vietnam."

Then came the August Revolution of 1945, in which Hiên took an active part. The Democratic Front led by the Communists waged a determined struggle against the French and Japanese imperialists so as to gain the country's independence. The young artist lost no time in enrolling with a detachment of youth volunteers.

It was a detachment of a far from usual type. Although each of the soldiers was armed with a rifle, the detachment was also given a more complex assignment in addition to straightforward fighting: it had been set up to rally supporters for the liberation struggle. The young propagandists covered hundreds of miles through the jungle and hill country in clothes that were soon very much the worse for wear as a result of those long, difficult treks; they were frequently obliged to go without food for considerable periods as they travelled through their native land telling those whom they met on their way the truth about the revolution, appealing to them to join in the struggle and setting up local organs of self-administration. The steep barely visible paths leading up into the jungle-covered hills at times brought the young volunteers to places where people had never even heard of the Second World War or the revolution.

It was at that period of his life that Hiên's skill as a painter stood him in good stead. In places, where it was often hard to spread their message in words, the young soldiers communicated with the local inhabitants by means of vivid brightly-colored drawings which conveyed a message that was unmistakable for everyone. Rare is the peasant who does not

understand a drawing depicting an emaciated, threadbare man of his own kind being driven from his rice-fields by a fat cruel foreign invader! Hiên put all his heart into those drawings and posters.

In July 1947 Hiên joined the People's Army. This step represented no small sacrifice on Hiên's part, because he had not yet completed his course at the Art School and had no idea whether he would ever have the opportunity to complete his studies at a later date, or to become a real artist. It was not that Hiên was giving any thought to the name he might make for himself though, he was only anxious to spend his most active years in such a way as to serve his native country to the best of his ability, in the most useful way he could. In his heart of hearts he was convinced that there was only one path in life for him.

Hiên's story provides as it were a reflection of the fate of his country; it is like a river which obediently follows every turn of its banks. All those years, during which the Vietnamese people fought to gain their independence and defended their Homeland against foreign colonisers, the young artist Mai Văn Hiên served in his country's army.

There is no end to the number of privations which man can endure in the cause of his country's freedom and brighter future, and the stoicism he can display. When I asked Hiên about his family, he smiled wistfully and gave me the following answer:

"I was one of six brothers. Perhaps there are less than six of us by now. It's possible that my parents are also dead. I haven't seen them for twenty-three years."

I was overwhelmed by his answer, at the thought that he hadn't seen his relatives, who had stayed behind in South Vietnam, for twenty-



Portrait of a woman





three years! And to think that he said that with a smile!... Then I remembered the pilot Dang whose life had followed a course similar to that of the artist. He also had told us with a wry smile that he had not seen his family or heard any news of them for over fifteen years. It was evidently a national characteristic of the Vietnamese to conceal their suffering deep down inside and smile as they talked of matters that hurt them most bitterly of all. What amazing endurance, what self control!

Gauguin once wrote to his brother in the following words: 'If you had become an artist there would probably be many things that would have come to you as a surprise, in particular that painting and all that goes hand-in-hand with it involves really hard physical work, quite apart from the intense concentration and emotional exertion it demands more and more of one's strength from day to day.'

'It demands so much of a man that at the moment to devote oneself to painting is just as exhausting and testing as a military campaign or battle.'

Gauguin's lot in life was an extremely hard one; but Hien for his part not only had to come to terms with the difficult lot of the painter but in addition had to stand up to long marches, battles and long years of war.

In 1947 Hien began to work on the staff of the Army newspaper *In Defence of the Fatherland*. This post meant that Hien was to spend most of his time collecting on-the-spot material straight from the battle-field. He also designed a good deal of posters and somehow managed to find time for painting into the bargain. He filled sketch-album after sketch-album and managed

Paths of battle



Village in the province of Thanh-hoa

to amass a large quantity of invaluable material despite the difficult conditions he was working under and the long distances he had to cover by bicycle every day.

"My former participation in military operations was of undeniable significance to me as an artist," Hiên pointed out "In the first place I

was able to collect a large amount of material on the war—like your painter Vereshchagin," he added, "although I'm not to be compared with him, of course. Then the soldiers' comments were invaluable as well; they were my first critics and it was always very interesting to observe their reactions. I used to draw countless small pictures for them."

On March 14, 1954, Hiên was summoned unexpectedly to go at once to the area where Vietnamese units were besieging one of the fortresses manned by the French. The last fifty miles of that journey through the jungle the artist had to travel on foot, taking with him the essential minimum of paints, canvas and paper as his only luggage. The commander of the unit, which Hiên eventually reached more dead than alive, said to him on his arrival:

"You have painted countless posters and pictures for our soldiers, now I want you to try and paint something for the enemy. Their morale out there in the fortress garrison is at a very low ebb. They are bound to surrender any minute now. Don't pay any attention to the fact that they are now shooting volley after volley, it's because of the terrible panic they're in. I want you to bang one more nail into their coffin: an enormous painting big enough for the enemy to be able to make out without the help of binoculars. Paint a picture of what awaits them if they don't surrender..." said the commander with a wry smile. Then he gave him an encouraging pat on the shoulder and said apologetically: "There's not a minute to be lost. You can't rest now. I'm afraid. I'll send some men along, to help you. Get going!"

We set to work at once; that was a task like nothing I had ever known before. As French mines and shells whistled past us we started sticking together an enormous patchwork of

white sheets of paper and collecting up ink and charcoal. Soon we had a "canvas" ready that measured 450 square feet. It made a perfect target for the enemy planes that kept circling overhead, so the soldiers started cutting bamboo stakes and setting up an enormous dome of green camouflage overhead.

"That was the most testing day of my whole life," Hiên went on, "and then all of a sudden I remembered those lines of your poet Mayakovsky:

You s'pose it's easier to shine all day up there? Just try.

"There was no time to worry about details or technique of course, the whole thing had to be thrown together in the course of that one day. Indeed, the picture's whole life-span was to be no more than half an hour. That night the soldiers made their way right up to the fortress and erected the 'picture' a mere five or six hundred feet from its walls. A few hours later the first of all complete silence in the fortress. But then things started in earnest and in the first ten minutes the French fired more mines than we usually had to face in twenty-four hours. There was soon nothing left of the picture. It had obviously hit them where it hurt. Our men on the other hand went wild with joy. What greater reward could an artist ask for than that?" asked Hiên with another of his self-effacing smiles. "Mayakovsky taught me a great deal, particularly with regard to the role art can play. Art can be a highly reliable weapon in times of grim struggle and in Vietnam at the moment all art, without exception, is directed toward this end."

Sketches made on the battle-field provide artists with material for large canvases nowa-

days in Vietnam; this was the case with regard to his picture "Meeting" which was awarded First Prize. In 1960 Muscovites had the chance to see that picture at the exhibition of works by Vietnamese artists held in the city's main exhibition hall.

Hiên went on to tell us where he had made his original sketches for that work: "On a long jungle march one of the soldiers in our unit met his fiancée whom he had not seen for five years. All the figures in the picture are modelled on soldiers from my platoon."

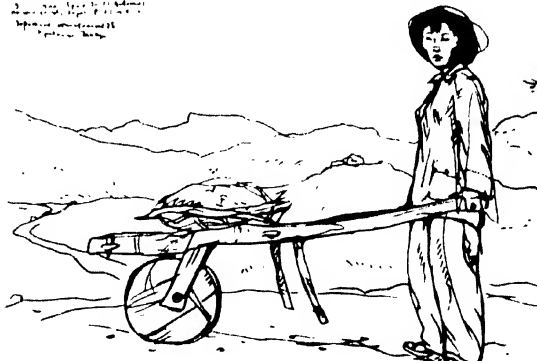
War themes now predominate in the work of Mai Văn Hiên, Captain in the People's Army.

Hiên also told us about his colleagues, whose pictures were displayed at the exhibition, and the work they were currently engaged in.

In answer to my query as to which European artist he admired most came the following answer:

"I try and learn from a good number, and especially from Russian artists. It is very difficult to choose any one particular artist, and too much admiration can breed fear, a fear of breaking with the traditional."

HIÊN - The Artist
2. Mai Văn Hiên (left) and his
colleague, who drew the
picture "Meeting".



TWENTIETH-CENTURY CANNIBALS

The town of Thanh-hoa in ruins



While we were still in Hanoi the staff of the Permanent Legation of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front in the DRV gave a press conference in Hanoi's International Club. Over 100 Vietnamese and foreign journalists and diplomats were assembled for the occasion.

Trương Công Đồng, a member of the Permanent Legation, gave the assembled company an introduction to the Third Book put out by the South Vietnam Committee for Denunciation of the War Crimes of US Imperialists in South Vietnam. His account of new cases of mass annihilation of the civilian population in South Vietnam filled his audience with horror.

Trương Công Đồng declared that the foreign invaders and the South Vietnamese puppet régime had set themselves three monstrous goals: "Burn everything, destroy everything and kill everyone!"

The facts included in the Third Book cannot be described as anything other than systematic genocide. Whole provinces have been razed to the ground, villages have been flattened with bulldozers and surviving inhabitants then hounded off to concentration camps. In those areas where the American troops are stationed, so-called Dead Zones are being created. The enemy makes extensive use of all the most modern methods of annihilation.

For example in the Cu Tri district American soldiers together with forces of the puppet régime fired some three shells at each of the local inhabitants.

In some parts of the world there were people who found it impossible to believe the accounts of the atrocities perpetrated by the Americans in South Vietnam. The bourgeois American newspapers dismissed them as "propaganda". Later when eye-witness accounts of the destruction of whole villages, the use of gas and napalm

started to make their way into the Western press, the theory was put forward to the effect that since there was a war on civilian deaths were inevitable, "part of the accepted order of things". However people did at last wake up to what was actually happening after the hair-raising accounts of the barbarity of the American forces in the village of Songai. That bestial, completely unjustified murder of women, children and old men opened the eyes of even the most sceptical people. The incident was referred to as "a disgraceful stain on our country" by some of the American papers. Yet there are actually thousands of such "stains", which the American authorities shamefacedly hush up. However, they are finding it more and more difficult to stop news of them leaking through into the press. Sooner or later the butchers will be confronted with the heavy burden of crimes against a whole people, with the brutality that they perpetrated and called to account: the peoples of the world are bound to pronounce the strictest of sentences!

As I listened to the speech made by Trương Công Đồng I could not help recalling the bitter story we had heard from the young guerilla from South Vietnam, Ngô Thi Tuất.

We learnt that despite the difficulties that faced those trying to organise the education network in the liberated areas, the bombed school-buildings and the lack of paper and writing materials, school attendance figures were growing steadily. Some of the youth detachments in the province of Quangninh used smooth rock faces as substitute blackboards. Every effort is being made to train the men serving in Army units in important trades and skills apart from military know-how, so that as soon as the war is over they should be able to embark on peace-time work without delay.

During the long years of foreign domination the Vietnamese people has had only one path to liberation open to it—struggle. This path involved suffering and privation and tremendous sacrifices. These years of struggle brought the people strength through experience, so that the American military found themselves up against a formidable enemy. In the course of the long war years the Vietnamese have become first-class soldiers, well up in all modern military techniques. The whole population is in vigilant mood; the ability to adapt to war conditions and extract themselves from tight

At the press conference of the Permanent Legation of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front in the DRV

corners have become universal attributes. In the southern part of Zone IV of the DRV, which is subjected to particularly intensive air attacks from the Americans, virtually the whole population has gone underground, thus providing a practical expression of the slogan "All Vietnamese houses are linked together by a single trench!". In that part of the country people work, watch films, hold meetings, make dates—all underground.

During our subsequent talk with Central Committee Secretary from the Vietnamese Union of Working Youth, Comrade Lu Minh Châu, we also discussed the question of the people's determination to overcome all the problems they happen to encounter for the sake of their ultimate victory. Comrade Lu Minh Châu explained: "Our principal task is to foster among the youth a spirit of class consciousness, a sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the fate of South Vietnam and an awareness of the need for them to perform their international duty with regard to the international revolutionary movement. Some time back a group of foreign comrades came to see us; they were not really convinced by what they had heard about our youth's fighting spirit. After they had seen them on the battle-field they immediately put paid to all their doubts."

Lu Minh Châu went on to tell us about the work of the youth shock brigades in the various provinces of Vietnam. A popular campaign is now under way, which calls upon soldiers to reduce losses to a minimum through crafty manoeuvring, to bring their native wit and nous into play.

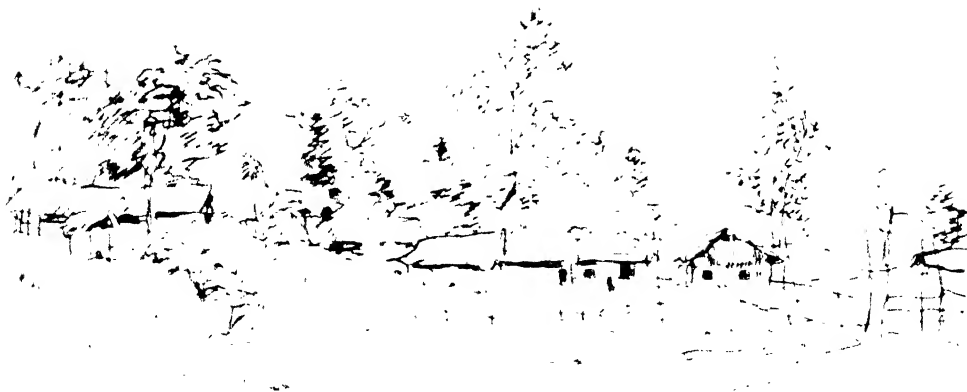
A variety of such "movements" and "campaigns" are under way throughout Vietnam. For example the population is called upon "to turn bomb-craters into compost-containers".



A victim of
American bombing,
young Le Văn Luân

THE “JUNGLE” INSTITUTE

“Jungle” Institute



Our next port of call was the Hanoi Pharmaceutical Institute. Although the word Hanoi appears in its name a journey of a good eighty miles from the capital is required to reach it. At seven o'clock one morning we got into the inevitable cars complete with a camouflage of leafy branches and drove quickly out of the city in a northerly direction. As soon as we got outside the city we came across devastated villages; sometimes we drove through ruins that stretched for miles on end. All villages situated near bridges and crossings had also been bombed out. The last part of our journey took us through an area where the red earth was dry and full of cracks. Our cars sent up an endless cloud of red dust, that got into everything, watches, shirt collars and even cameras.

The road led steadily uphill, and soon open country gave way to woods. There was no end to the bends in the road. We were driving along so fast that it seemed as if the car would overturn any second. All of a sudden we came to a hairpin-bend and the driver jammed on the brakes. Several girls and two young men started walking across a small clearing at the side of the road to come to meet us.

"We're here, Comrades," Le Thanh announced. "Those are people from the institute coming out to welcome you."

We got out and shook hands. They turned out to be students from the institute and the two men with them were Comrade Dai, the Rector of the institute, and the Party Secretary.

We crossed a small hill by way of a narrow path through the trees and then found ourselves in a picturesque wooded valley. There were bamboo and papaya trees, that resemble coconut palms, with clusters of green fruit growing out of their trunks. Later we caught sight of some trees with thick foliage that were remi-



The Rector of the Hanoi Pharmaceutical Institute

niscient of elms. Through the trees we could see the sparkling water of a nearby river.

"Here's our institute," said the Rector pointing down into the valley and eyeing us curiously for our reactions. We stood there in stunned silence for all we could see at that moment was a cyclist in a pointed straw hat making his way along the narrow path through the bushes; there was not a single sign of human habitation to be seen, just hills, hills and more hills, piling up one above the other. They seemed to dissolve in the misty haze to become part of the sky. Those wooded hills, which stretched as far as the eye could see, lent serenity to the scene before us while the dense forest appeared primeval,



so that if it had not been for the cyclist who from time to time came into view among the bushes one might well have thought that no man had ever set foot in the valley.

After taking a closer look however we managed to pick out small wisps of smoke down in the valley and I noticed a peasant woman in one of the glades, ploughing with two buffaloes.

Comrade Dai at last interrupted our reverie: "Dear friends, let's go to the institute, I want to be able to show you everything before it gets dark."

He then proceeded to lead the way along a small stony path. He explained en route that the institute had been transferred to this jungle site the year before, and everything had had to be started right from scratch.

From the ensuing account of that operation it emerged that the staff and students had accomplished a truly miraculous feat.

"When the DRV Government decided that our institute should be evacuated hundreds of problems faced the students and teachers: there were no teaching premises, living accommodation and nowhere to house our high-precision apparatus and equipment. There was no electricity or water supply. However the Army needs medical supplies and the Party could not risk letting the institute stay on in Hanoi, so we moved here."

The mind boggles at the thought of setting up a modern scientific institute in the jungle, of housing fifteen hundred students and post-graduates. The laboratories now have bamboo roofs and they are scattered over the hill slopes. Meanwhile meticulous research has to go on which requires high-precision apparatus. However to get from the institute to the nearest railway station involves a twenty-four-hour journey on foot. But the Army needs medical supplies. Wounds have to be treated after old people and children have been hit by pellet bombs, napalm burns have to be cared for, antidotes for gases and poisons and drugs to combat fever and all manner of tropical diseases have to be prepared.

"Our jungle contains a wealth of herbs with medicinal properties," Dai told us. "Our ancestors used them in the past to treat every disease under the sun. As time went on though many of these traditional cures were forgotten. Nowadays with the help of modern scientific knowledge we are trying to preserve the precious knowledge which our forefathers handed down to us."

A new home for the Institute's departments





Military training for future pharmacutists

"So you see, it turned out that the American air raids on Hanoi that forced us to take cover in the jungle brought us nearer to our sources of medicinal raw materials. The numerous problems we face do not deter us, our people is not afraid of hardships. We Marxists look at everything from a dialectical point of view, moving out here into the jungle made our work more difficult, but it led us to extend the range of our scientific investigation. In the eighty years of its existence before the August Revolution this School of Pharmacy later reorganised as a Pharmaceutical Institute, only trained a total of 53 Vietnamese pharmacists, while the population numbers 23 million! At the moment there are 1,500 students enrolled at our institute; in the course of the last two years 230 scientific

investigations have been carried out, the vast majority of them making a direct contribution to the war effort!"

While we were talking we came out of the woods on to a proper road bordered with large, well-built bamboo houses. We stopped in front of one of them and the Rector told us that it was the biochemistry faculty for second-year students.

The lecture-room inside was empty because all the students were doing practicals at the time. We walked about between the desks that were made of split bamboo-caness but in all other respects resembled desks the world over, the only difference being that the most common subject of the doodling and scribbles on them was a burning plane bearing the letters USA and reeling earthwards.

I picked up one of the students' notebooks. The formulas, diagrams and texts were all extremely neatly laid out, there was not a single blot or crossing-out to be seen.

The laboratory roofs were held up by enormous tree-trunks and their walls were hung with brightly coloured posters depicting medicinal herbs. In one corner I saw some crates that had not yet been unpacked and bore the inscription "VAG Medexport" or "Mashexport". One of the girl students by the name of Trần Tuất Loe was working with a large microscope examining a tiny drop of liquid on a glass slide. Nguyễn Thanh, one of the fourth-year students, told us that this particular laboratory was working on new drugs to combat malaria and influenza.

"At the same time these students are also compiling a pharmacopoeia and a herb atlas," he added.

"What are you working on?" I asked another of the students. He told me the name of the herb in Vietnamese and then came out straight

away with its Latin name—*Stephania rotunda*—explaining that it was a herb with considerable possibilities which could be used to treat a large number of diseases.

After that we made our way through some more jungle to the students' hostels. Over an area that stretches for about seven miles along the narrow valley 250 houses, a kindergarten and a primary school have already been built and it is the students who do all the building work and lay on the food. That year they had grown enough vegetables, cassava and sweet potatoes from their allotments for a total of 70 pounds per head, while the livestock they kept on the premises had provided over ten pounds of meat for each person.

Military and P.T. drill was going on in a large green field next to the hostels. There were about four hundred students there, some taking part in the gymnastics, while another group were crawling forward on their stomachs armed with rifles and complete with a camouflage of leafy branches. A little further away there was target practice going on and some of the boys were practising a traditional form of wrestling, armed with thick staffs.

It turned dark very quickly and soon we heard a gong ring out. Students started making their way down the hillside along the narrow jungle paths. The light from hundreds of little pocket torches could be seen flickering among the trees. It was an unforgettable sight. But soon the silence was disturbed by the roar of an airplane overhead.

"It's an American plane from Thailand," Rector Dai told us. Five minutes later shooting started up in the distance, so the air pirate must have been spotted.

That evening a special gathering devoted to the friendship that links the Soviet Union and

Vietnam was arranged in the students' assembly room. So many people had crowded in under the enormous roof supported by solid bamboo props that they were packed in like sardines. Apart from the students and teachers I could see large numbers of children as well. Some of them were sitting on the benches and others were peering in from outside. Ilya and I told them about life in the Soviet Union and answered questions. Afterwards the students gave a short concert and then we all started singing songs together. Soviet, Vietnamese and Polish songs.

We had made the trip to the institute in the company of the Polish writer, Monika Warnenska, who had visited Vietnam before and had already made many friends in the country. We were given a very warm send-off. The Rector drove out part of the way with us, leading us back to the main road. It was a good thing too for we would never have managed without him. We reached Hanoi late at night and were covered in dust from head to foot when we got back to the hotel tired out but grateful for such an interesting day.

Laboratories under bamboo roofs



LIFE-LINE

Glazunov never used to stop sketching as we walked about the picturesque crowded streets of Hanoi, talking to plenty of people on our way.

The houses on the outskirts of the city were most unusual to our eyes for all that separated the rooms inside from the street was a row of thin bamboo mats suspended from the ceiling. The life of the household was completely ex-

posed to the outside world. We could see housewives preparing food and putting their children to bed. Incidentally, despite government orders to have all children evacuated from Hanoi, there were still untold numbers to be seen running about.

On many occasions we had had to keep within easy reach of bomb-shelters waiting for the all-clear after air-raid warnings. On the day in

Route No. 1



question there had been more raids than usual; as far as we could tell it was the residential suburbs that were in for it on that occasion. Loud explosions in the distance could frequently be heard.

In the late afternoon Lê Thanh appeared. He looked very martial this time with a pistol holster at his belt, a steel helmet, and carried a carbine. "In an hour's time we leave for Zone IV," he announced.

It did not take us long to collect our things together, including Glazunov's canvases and sketchbooks and a dozen or so plywood boxes containing presents for Vietnamese youngsters from small Soviet schoolchildren. Lê Thanh then equipped us with steel helmets of Soviet make.

Another air-raid warning delayed our departure for a short period and we could only set off after nightfall. We were accompanied by Lê Thanh, Khai and Lê Côn, deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Avantgarde*. If no air-raid warnings were given Hanoi was always brightly lit in the evenings so that we were able to drive along well-lit avenues, thronging with people, then past various factories and brick warehouses. It was only after we had left Hanoi behind us that we were plunged into darkness.

"This is where Route No 1 begins," Lê Côn told us.

It took us six hours to travel some thirty miles after that, but what a journey it turned out to be! It was after two o'clock when we reached our destination—a small hotel not far from Thanh-hoa.

The main problem for traffic on that road were the river crossings. Most of the bridges had been bombed to bits. All we could make out in the pitch dark were vague silhouettes of bullocks and devastated farmhouses. We were

delayed for some time at the first crossing point. Out of the darkness there suddenly loomed enormous MAZ trucks bereft of any lights whatsoever; they were carrying weapons under tarpaulin covers, and rumbled formidable as they drove past. There were cyclists riding along the side of the road, their vehicles loaded to capacity. As a rule enormous plaited baskets are suspended from both sides of the luggage rack. Vietnamese cyclists can carry loads of up to half a ton! Other people were carrying large bales with the help of a yoke moving forward at a loping run rather than walking. Detachments of soldiers were on the move as well. Yet despite the incredible numbers and congestion there was no bustle or confusion. Now and then an order was shouted or people hailed each other, but most conversations were conducted in hushed tones. This tremendous "operation" was going on at dead of night, and no lights could be used!

While we were waiting our turn to go across an officer came up and invited us to have a cup of tea in a small building by the side of the road that was full of soldiers whose job it was to supervise the crossing. A large table of rough-hewn logs stood in the middle of the room in which all the windows were blacked-out. A small kerosene lantern shed its dim light on the men sitting at the table, some of whom were drinking tea. Their submachine-guns were stacked up nearby. The soldiers moved up to make room for us and one of them asked if we were Soviet. He reacted to my answer with a tired smile. Indeed, all the men looked quite exhausted. We learnt that they had only just come off duty. Upstairs from behind a curtain came quiet voices of soldiers taking it easy after a hard day's work. We had only just finished our tea when our driver came rushing in to tell



On the outskirts of the capital

us that our turn had come at the crossing and that we should hurry back to the car.

We thanked the men for the tea and on my way out I noticed that the thick book on the table was a copy of Sholokhov in Vietnamese.

One by one the vehicles made their way on to the log crossing. There were some people tightening the joints between the logs, standing waist deep in water as they worked. The soldier in charge of the traffic waved everyone on. Our vehicle started to bump rapidly across the logs.

The road got worse and worse with every mile. There was no end to the potholes and large patches of upturned asphalt all the way and we had to make frequent detours. It seemed as if the Americans had not left a single square foot of that vital road untouched, a road which led right through the country from north to south.

On a number of occasions we had to make detours where workmen were filling in fresh bomb-craters. The damage was particularly serious on a stretch of the road by a small railway junction. In fact, all that was left of the station was a mountain of stones and debris. There was a sharp smell of antiseptic in the air. We were told later that a raid had only just taken place there. The fiends had bombed to bits a train carrying medical supplies.

Two or three times we were stopped by patrols, to have our papers checked. One of the soldiers drew attention to the fact that one of our cars had a light that exceeded the statutory brightness. It is worth noting what kind of light he was talking about. Under the front bumper was fixed a bicycle lamp inside a deep tin which let out a pathetic little gleam of light on to the road.

As I looked at the dim silhouettes of the cars moving past us in the opposite direction in a never ending chain I involuntarily compared that road with another that, although cold and wind-swept, had been equally full of bomb-craters and shell holes and where there had also been burnt-out lorries lining both sides. I could not help comparing it with Leningrad's Life-Line during the city's long siege, along which an endless chain of lorries carrying ammunition and food made their way to the beleaguered city. This tremendous work all had to be carried out at night. Route No 1 is Vietnam's Life-Line: it is impossible to count up the bomb-craters that have been made in it. It would be still more difficult to estimate the amount of freight that has been transported down this road, the troops that have been sent

Nguyễn Thị Lan studies so as to help build and defend her Homeland.



into action along it. However one day the time will come and records of these operations will be drawn up. There will come a time when the traffic on this road will no longer have to move under cover of impenetrable darkness, bright headlights will shine out, neon lights will flash all the way and the journey from Hanoi to Saigon will only take a few hours, just as it did in the old days.

Just like Leningrad's Life-Line so Vietnam's Route No. 1 will live on in the hearts of the people. I thought to myself that it would be as well to leave whole sections of it in their present state, full of potholes and craters and lined with ruined buildings, as a symbolic monument to the men and the unshakable tenacity of the victorious people.

Several times in the course of that night we heard the roar of enormous armoured vehicles, long-barrelled anti-aircraft guns, rockets, and large guns under tarpaulines rushed past us at high speeds.

On each occasion Khan came out with the word "Redeployment".

The local people had helped set up convenient and well-protected gun emplacements in every corner of the land. Whenever ack-ack batteries took on the enemy, by the next morning they would already have been moved to another spot from where it would again be able to take the Americans by surprise, while American planes set out to bomb empty positions.

Several times I received painful knocks on the head when we drove along stretches of road where the pits and ruts were particularly deep - it was from the boxes of presents that had been piled up just behind us. To be on the safe side I put one of the steel helmets on. It gave out a metallic ring as my head banged against the side of the car which stopped me from falling

asleep. In the end though my tiredness won out and I started to doze off, I woke up when the car pulled to an unexpected halt. Hoa told me that it was because the Americans had just flown over very low. There was a blanket of silence all around and it was very warm without a breath of wind, in the dark I could make out thousands of sparkling glow-worms. After a while we were able to pick up a vague roaring sound to the left of the main road. "We're right next to the Louking Gull here," Thanh explained. "The Americans have flown away in that direction in order to turn, but they may fly back this way any moment. We must wait for them, because even at night they fire rockets at cars." Before we reached the town of Thanh-hoa, the centre of the province with the same name, we turned off on to a cart-track and drove on for at least an hour, past villages and along dykes that were all enveloped in the same all-pervading darkness. Finally we stopped by a small grove of trees. The driver got out and soon came back with a man who was bent double with some crippling disease. He gave us a firm, friendly handshake. I was just about to reply to his words of greeting, but one false step from the narrow path, that was impossible to make out in the dark, landed me in a deep trench. Fortunately, no serious damage was done.

A small wick-lamp was burning in the bamboo-but with an earthen floor, to which we were led. The furniture consisted of an enormous table and a few simple benches. In the corner there was a large and elegant cupboard containing china. The master of the house invited us to sit down at the table. We were desperately tired by this time and tried to make our excuses but Thanh said that some comrades from the provincial administration were about to arrive and we ought not to disappoint them.

as they had been waiting for us for a long time. We sat down and our host started pouring out Chinese tea. I had already noticed by then that wherever you go in Vietnam, whether on business or a visit to friends, and regardless of the time of day, one is always offered fragrant Chinese tea. It is drunk without sugar, and although I did not like it at first I soon acquired the taste. It is a remarkably refreshing and invigorating drink. On this occasion Chinese tea came to the rescue once more; after the first small cup our tiredness vanished.

A few minutes later two young men and a girl carrying an enormous bouquet of gladioli came into the hut. There was something very unexpected and touching about those beautiful flowers in that bamboo-hut by the dim light of a small wick-lamp at the dead of night.

One of the new arrivals Nguyễn Văn Già turned out to be the First Secretary of the provincial committee of the Union of Working Youth. Nguyễn Thị Yên was one of the people in charge of the local committee of the same

organisation and the girl Nguyễn Thị Phương was a blast-furnace operator from a small factory not far from the famous Hàm Rồng bridge.

As we slowly sipped the tea we asked our Vietnamese hosts about the local youth activities, the bombing-runs and shelling, about the difficulties which they had to cope with.

We learnt for example that in the course of one year the Americans had bombed the province of Thanh-hoa 3,070 times, dropping a total of eleven thousand tons of bombs. It appeared that the bombing techniques also varied a good deal: sometimes towns were subjected to uninterrupted massive attacks that lasted for days and other short surprise attacks were employed.

Nguyễn Văn Già told us about little Trần Thị Xê who for her courage was granted the honour of being chosen along with five other members of the Young Pioneer organisation to attend the 4th Congress of Heroes of the DRV. I asked if it would be possible to meet her and he nodded in reply "We shall introduce you



American barbarians have destroyed everything along Route No. 1



*A woman from one of
the country's moun-
tain regions*

to her tomorrow," Nguyễn Văn Gia said with a willing nod, then after looking at his watch he laughed and said, "or rather today."

Indeed by then it was already four o'clock in the morning.

That night we heard a detailed account of the way in which the Americans and their South-Vietnamese henchmen subjected the people of the DRV to intensive brain-washing. Pamphlets calling upon them to abandon the struggle, love their "brothers from the south" and wipe out Communists are dropped by the thousands and even millions. Radio stations also subject the people to a constant barrage of propaganda. Planes drop crates containing transistor radio-sets, forged banknotes, clothes and even toys. These "presents" are particularly numerous just before the New Year. On frequent occasions North Vietnamese fishermen captured out at sea are "regally" equipped with clothes and other gifts, before being released to return home, the Americans do this in the hope that rumours of their "kindness" will help them to break down local resistance. However one of two things is done with all these presents: either they are handed in to the state or destroyed. Indeed, peasants whose wives and children have been killed while working on the rice-fields could hardly be expected to act otherwise; what little boy could start playing with American toys just after burying his parents killed in an air-raid?

Such ideological acts carried out by the aggressors are nothing but inhuman cant.

"They just bomb everything--huts, schools (almost a hundred in this province), hospitals," Nguyễn Văn Gia told us. "The other day they razed a 500-bed hospital to the ground. The planes even chase buffaloes . . . At the beginning we used to think that rockets and bombs were too costly weapons to waste on the destruction

of individual bamboo-huts or small wooden bridges across streams. People used to say: 'Only when rockets cost as little as 5 dong will the Americans start shelling huts.' Yet they keep at it."

Then he came out with a poem:

*There is the iron and steel,
Yet our tanks should bar their way;
There are the atom bombs,
Yet our courage shall win the day.*

Nguyễn Thị Phương who operates a blast furnace has got two fingers missing on her left hand. Even in the semi-darkness it was visible that the skin on her hands and face had been badly burnt and we asked her how it had happened. It turned out that in the course of one of those numerous bombing attacks a bomb had fallen into her particular furnace. A fountain of molten cast iron had splashed up out of the furnace, setting everything on fire. Thị Phương was handing shells to the men manning the anti-aircraft guns at the time.

"The soldiers told me afterwards," remarked Van Gia proudly, "that Phương did not cry out at all. She's a really brave girl. You know, we have a motto here: 'If you're seriously wounded don't cry out, if your wounds are slight then don't quit your work, take the place of those who go to man the guns.' But that's a motto for men and she is only a young girl!"

Phuong gave a bashful smile.

Everyone was convinced that she would die because the burns were so severe. But her father pulled her through. He kept a constant vigil and for six months did not move from her bedside and treated her burns with some herbal remedy. For the first twenty-five days Phuong lay on fresh banana leaves. The Vietnamese maintain banana leaves draw off the heat . . .

TRẦN THỊ VE FROM THE YOUNG PIONEERS

Little Trần Thị Ve has a direct forthright gaze. She wears a scarlet Pioneer tie with her blue and white striped blouse. Her voice is a high, melodious one and she talks fast. She interrupts her conversation with sudden unexpected pauses though, smiles and seems to be wondering whether she should go on or not.

That day it was warm and dry. We were sitting on the grass of a small hillock as we talked. Glazunov had installed himself there

with a sheet of whatman paper attached to a board with drawing pins and was making some preliminary sketches for a portrait of the small girl.

Her story was a long one and she told it with verve and plenty of detail.

It was an early morning with no wind; the greeny-blue surface of the Tonking Gulf was sparkling under the sun's rays. The last tiny white wisps of mist were fading from sight and fishermen's junks were gliding across the water. Their intricate ribbed sails—dark grey, orange or bright red made the bay look gay and

In Ngean province



Yed Toun Kya and Mrs. An

festive. It was quiet and you could sense the smell of sap coming from the small pine-trees, no higher than a man. The pine-trees were just like the ones in Russia only the needles were not at all prickly. Beyond the pines there was luxuriant bamboo, proud slender coconut palms, papayas and the wide pale green leaves of banana trees, and in the shadow of those trees nestled a tiny village.

At the very edge of the village stood the little bamboo house where Trần Thị Ve lived. The bamboo trees round her house had only recently been planted. Trần Thị Ve had only come to that village with her father a few years ago and the bamboo which they had planted had not yet had time to grow tall and thick as elsewhere in the village. She had fled from the south with her father and her brothers to escape the American invaders, after losing her mother in an American air-raid when her native village had been burnt to the ground. Three of her brothers were serving in the Army but the fourth one had been killed.

Trần Thị Ve and her father chose this particular village because they had relatives here, Ve's aunt and uncle and her little cousin Trinh. Her father used to go out fishing in the gulf sometimes for as long as weeks on end. When she heard firing out at sea and the whine of airplane engines Trần Thị Ve's heart stood still and she would look anxiously out to sea waiting for her father's return. Little Ve had to run the house: she planted banana trees, small coconut palms and bushes of crimson flowers, known as Buddhist Monks, which in the Soviet Union are called Chinese Roses.

Trần Thị Ve used to get up early, as soon as the sun started to gild the summits of the blue mountains in the distance. She would tidy their little bamboo house, light the stove

and put some water on to boil in an iron pot. When the water boiled she would throw in a couple of handfuls of rice which had to do for her and little Trinh for breakfast, dinner and supper. To the rice she would add fish sauce and for dinner there would be one or two bananas as well.

After breakfast Ve used to go to school carrying her books tied up in a brightly coloured kerchief that her father had given her. At school she used to listen all ears to what the young teacher told her pupils about distant lands, where snow fell in the winter and where children went sleighing. In her writing-book she used to trace out the words "Mama", "friendship", "victory", with her thin-ribbed pen. Trần Thị Ve was one of the best pupils in the class.

After school was over Trần Thị Ve would often be planting out rice shoots standing ankle-deep in water, carefully sticking each shoot into the wet soil. Or she used to take their big buffalo with the kind, wistful eyes out to graze on the narrow green bands dividing the squares of the rice-fields. In the space of a single year little Ve worked 1,000 hours in the village co-operative farm.

One peaceful morning Trần Thị Ve climbed up on to the back of her buffalo and gave him a gentle pat on the neck with the palm of her hand, at which he set off at a leisurely pace for the bank of the nearby canal, bending down every now and then to take a bite of grass. Ve watched the heavily loaded junks sailing down the canal, listening to the water lapping against the sides and the creaking of the masts. Suddenly American planes roared past like sinister black birds. Four explosions rent the air one after the other and one of the blasts knocked her off the buffalo's back on to the grass. When little Ve got up she saw that all that was

left of the neighbouring hospital was a pile of dust and ruins with smoke climbing from them up into the sky. The airplanes kept circling round the fields, filling the air with their hideous roar.

Small fountains of water were splashing up from the canal and the rice-fields, now that the air-crews had started using machine-guns. At the far end of the rice-field some terrified little children who had been grazing buffaloes were huddled together in a frightened bunch and there were no grown-ups in sight. Trần Thi Ve ran across the fields paying no heed to the water that was being thrown up by the machine-gun fire to the right and left of her, her neck hunched into her shoulders. All she saw before her was the cluster of small children and her only thought was to reach them as soon as she could. It was vital that she should not slip or fall over. When she reached them she picked up the smallest of all in her arms and ran with them to the nearest trench. They had only just taken cover when a terrible explosion was heard on the very spot where they had been standing. Shell-splinters whistled through the air and lumps of earth and pieces of the wrecked house were thrown into the trench.

When Trần Thi Ve came to after the explosion, the air was full of thick smoke which made it hard to breathe. Right next to her were lying the other children amongst the debris and there was no one else but her to help them. First of all Trần Thi Ve struggled out of the trench from amidst the burning ruins. She was in pain and her arms and legs were bleeding, but there was no time to bandage them for the other small children were still buried under the wreckage. Trần Thi Ve started to clear away the smouldering bamboo and pull the bricks and wood out of the trench. She worked as fast as she

could, not sparing an ounce of her strength. First she reached little Hôi who was unconscious; she lifted him out into the fresh air and he opened his eyes and smiled on seeing Ve. Then she went on rummaging through into the wreckage and one by one she pulled out all five of the children. Little Trinh had had his leg shot through.

"I was so sorry for Trinh," Ve told us with a sigh, "later he had to have his leg off in the hospital."

When the planes flew away at last the children noticed that the buffaloes had all been killed.

That evening many grown-ups gathered at Trần Thi Ve's house. The girl prepared fragrant Chinese tea and brought out the best china that was decorated with brightly-coloured characters. They all sat down to sip slowly at the tea and talk about the rice-sowing and to praise the little girl for the competent way in which she kept house and worked on the farm. The chairman of the co-operative, an old grey-haired man, stroked Trần Thi Ve's hair when the visitors took their leave, and said to her:

"You are a daughter who does her father credit, little girl. Do not worry about the buffalo. The co-operative will see to it that you have another one."

It was a long time before little Ve went to sleep that night. She was unable to forget the dreadful whine of the planes overhead, and she was also proud to think that the grown-ups had come to drink tea at her house, because everyone knew that when grown-ups come to call on a little girl and drink tea at her table and talk about serious matters with her, that is a sign of their deep respect.

Young Trần Thi Ve with a direct courageous gaze



PILGRIMAGE TO THE HAM RÔNG BRIDGE

That afternoon we went to visit the crews manning the anti-aircraft guns at the Ham Rông bridge. Wherever we had gone during our visit to Vietnam, everyone had mentioned the defenders of this legendary bridge as an example of courage and fortitude. Ham Rông means dragon's tooth, and indeed this bridge has proved a veritable dragon for dozens of American Phantoms and Skyhawks that have been

brought down in the area. Songs and poems have been composed in honour of this bridge and it has provided the subject of many paintings.

We left our vehicles in the shade of banana trees in the village of Nam Ngam, whence we proceeded on foot along a narrow dirt road bordered by endless fields of sweet potatoes and cassava. The surrounding countryside con-

Rice fields





sisted of a wide-open plain, apart from some steep hills on the very horizon. Fleecey clouds tinged with gold floated overhead. There is a Vietnamese saying which runs: "Golden clouds bring hot weather and white ones bring rain." It was at the foot of those distant mountains that we finally reached the bridge. We walked over to one of the anti-aircraft batteries and the first thing that struck me was the complete lack of cover. That particular firing position was entirely exposed, in an open field pock-marked with bombsites. There was not a single bush or hollow in sight, and overhead nothing but endless expanses of open sky which at any moment might be filled with the roar of jet engines and the black smoke of exploding bombs. However on taking a closer look I realised for the umpteenth time how deceptive first impressions can be.

We were introduced to some of the men manning the guns—Vu Trôi Tin, the company commander, Nguyễn Đức Hồng, the company commissar, Trương Quang Anh, second-in-command, and the UYW Secretary (who it turned out was only seventeen), a volunteer by the name of Nguyễn Ngọc Thuong. They were all full of smiles and very sunburnt, in incredibly faded uniforms. It emerged that we were not their only visitors: people from a nearby village had brought the men some dinner, for the soldiers themselves were unable to leave their positions.

Several old women were sitting on the breastwork near the battery chewing stolidly away at betel and there was a decrepit old man with a wispy beard there too. He turned to us and said something pointing in the direction of the field.

Le Thanh translated for us: "He said that the field is a sack for bombs and that there

is no counting the number of times it has been ploughed up by them." The officers nodded in agreement. "The peasants no longer touch that field, because it's full of nothing but metal. They are waiting for peace-time."

The majority of the soldiers manning that battery were volunteers, some of whom had been serving in the infantry before coming to Ham Rong. Life for these men followed a strict time-table and part of each day was devoted to studies.

"As for practical training, we have plenty of it," commented the commissar with a laugh.

The men were in a very buoyant mood that day for their fellow villagers had brought them good news: their particular co-operative had won a prize for one of the biggest rice harvests.

"Growing rice is a far from simple task," the commander explained to us. "Not at all simple in fact. I'm right, aren't I?" he asked turning to the young peasants for corroboration. They nodded back at him and he went on: "Rice is a tricky customer! You have to plough deep and you've probably seen what we have to do our ploughing with—wooden ploughs drawn by buffaloes. Soviet tractors are first-class but we haven't got them everywhere. Then rice needs a lot of water and that's often in short supply. Planting it out is no easy job either, bending down knee-deep in water all the time. If you transplant the shoots spacing them out properly then you'll have a good harvest, but if you plant them too near together there won't be anything to eat at the end of it all. So that's it!"

He turned to us with a knowing smile and everyone laughed. Only the old women went on glumly chewing their betel spitting out the blood-red juice on the dry, cracked earth.

Growing rice is indeed a far from easy undertaking. One can drive for miles past

endless rice-fields divided into large squares by grass-covered bunds: tiny green shoots just stick out of the water and everywhere you see the figures of women in pointed straw hats bending almost double as they go about the work. Some of them have babies strapped to their backs and others carbines over their shoulders. Some of the women work hand- or foot-driven devices that drive the water along from one ditch to the next.

"Is rice planted in the Soviet Union?" asked one of the girls standing nearby. After that followed a whole deluge of questions. "What is Herman Titov doing at the moment?" "Titov is the President of the Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship Society and has visited the country." "Are there a lot of people living in Moscow?" "Tell us about the life of the Komsomol, please."

"Do tell us about your winter," was the next request from the girl who had asked about rice. "I would love to see snow and ride on a sledge. I have seen it in the cinema!" she added, throwing a guilty glance in the direction of the battery commander.

Then one of the old women said something in a toneless voice. Everyone fell silent when she started to speak. The old woman fixed her gaze on me and I noticed that her face was all dark and wrinkled like a piece of old parchment.

Thank told me that she wanted to know if people in the Soviet Union knew what war was. The commander explained in a low voice that the year before she had lost her son, also a soldier in an anti-aircraft battery, in the fighting not far from this particular area, and that her house had been burnt down.

This old man has lost his s



I was conscious of the sad, penetrating gaze of the old woman. How could I start to answer that question? I told her about Leningrad, about the hunger, the air-raids up to thirty times a day, the artillery bombardments, the cold and the snow that she had never seen, the Piskarevsky Cemetery where over 600 thousand of the city's people lay buried and about the man who died of hunger by our gateway and whom no one had the strength to take away and bury for a whole winter. The people round about me listened holding their breath in awe and the old woman gave an understanding nod.

We stayed with the battery till late that afternoon. From time to time some of the men would go on duty and others would come back for a rest. Some of the soldiers started telling me about their unit.

This particular battery had been defending the Ham Rong bridge ever since 1965. There was no end to the number of air-attacks they had beaten back. There had not been an easy lot: a particularly tense period had been January

19th and 20th in 1967. On the morning of the first day the ships of the 7th Fleet had started bombarding the area; after that planes had appeared, first reconnaissance aircraft and then 32 bomber attacks had followed. Some of the planes had made for the bridge and others for the firing positions. The planes had come over in four waves, and dropped bombs that exploded several feet above the ground. They appeared from the side of the sun. Some of the bombs fell right on to the positions. In two days the American planes carried out some 300 sorties.

"Our battery alone brought down three planes," the commander told us and got up to point to the places where they had come down. We could see enormous craters full of green water. One of them was only eight hundred feet from the battery's firing position.

"We took a major and a lieutenant-colonel prisoner," added the squadron's second-in-command.

At that one of the younger men chipped in with: "The Americans all carry little flags with labels that say in a number of languages: 'Please do not kill. Bring me to a safe place and feed me. Our government will repay you for this.'"

"You should have seen the way they started throwing out parachute flares that day in their panic!" laughed the commander. "The sun was shining directly overhead and they started using parachute flares!"

After that the commander said something to one of the young soldiers who ran off and then came back a few minutes later carrying an unexploded parachute flare that had been salvaged.

"Do you know what war is?" we were asked by an old woman at Ham Rong bridge



from a shot-down plane and a green round object.

"These are souvenirs for our Soviet friends," said the commander handing them to Ilya and me.

The parachute flare was long and thin and looked almost elegant. It was covered with various figures and details concerning the firm where it was made. Its four still closed nozzles were painted red. The round object turned out to be the oxygen apparatus from a reconnaissance plane.

Everyone who visits the DRV regards it as his duty to visit the defenders of the Hàm Rồng bridge and the soldiers always give their visitors some object from one of the shot-down planes as a souvenir. Just imagine the number of planes that must have been brought down by those gallant fighting men if there are enough souvenirs for literally thousands of visitors!

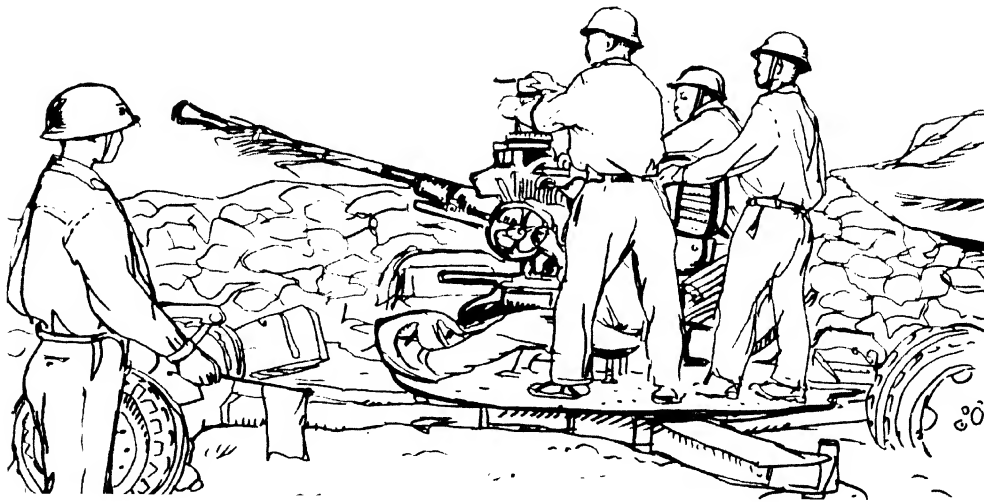
Incidentally the Vietnamese put every inch of those captured planes to good use. They use the plexiglass to repair the broken panes of their hut windows and captured weapons and ammunition are used against their former owners!

When the time came for us to say good-bye the commander asked me to convey their thanks to the Soviet people who had sent them fine weapons to defend their homeland with.

We went back to our cars and the old woman, who had just lost her son, stroked my hand by way of farewell.

When we crossed the Hàm Rồng bridge dusk was starting to fall. The bent trusses bristled forbiddingly as if in preparation for a new offensive. We could see that part of the bridge floor was brand-new.

Defenders of the legendary bridge



“WORK HARD, FAST, ECONOMICALLY AND WELL!”

Construction workers from the 214th Shock
Company



We continued our journey along the coast road with the sea to the left of us and the railway to the right. Repair-work was going on along almost the whole of the stretch of railway which we drove past that night. In the darkness we could just pick out workers and soldiers carrying rails over their shoulders and pushing wheelbarrows full of stones and sand. We could hear muffled cries and the ring of metal. Then I picked up another noise that stood out from the rest, the crunch of metal on sand mixed with the metallic clanging of rails. The sound grew nearer and nearer and then a clanking monster swept past us. We took a closer look and saw two lorries fixed on to platforms pulling along several goods trucks. We were to learn that because of the frequent shelling and air-raids it had been decided not to risk losing ordinary engines which made particularly easy targets for rockets but to use lorries instead. It meant rail traffic was slower but it cut down risks and whole strings of them could be set moving one after the other.

Soon after that we took a left fork in the direction of the gulf and started driving through quite deserted territory. As we drove through wooded swamps the road became quite unimaginable. It was amazing that the vehicle did not fall apart. We sat there as if stunned, in a kind of trance, our steel helmets banging every now and then against the metal corners of the car. Suddenly something whistled past us, once and then a second time, and we heard a click. The cars stopped and the driver of the second one, cursing for all he was worth, opened up the bonnet to investigate his engine.

"They started shooting and a stray bullet hit the car," Le Thanh explained.

That was all we managed to get out of him.

He just shrugged his shoulders and repeated: "Stray bullet."

The driver was unable to repair the engine and walked off into the darkness. We heard him give a whistle as he went which reminded us of the whistles used by Soviet militiamen. Soon after he returned in a car with some young men in military-type uniform. They fiddled around with the engine for about ten minutes and after several fits and starts it started up again. As we drove on we were stopped by several patrols. By this time we were driving through thick jungle. The driver switched on the headlights, with the help of which he was able to pick out a narrow path through the trees. Then we made our way across swampy soil specially covered with branches and finally ground to a halt after getting caught on a tree-stump. Thank heavens we had reached our destination by this point! The chaps who had repaired the damaged engine led the way for us along a small path which went uphill. There we came to a large shed-like building where some people were sitting drinking tea by the light of a small wick-lamp. Once again we caught the scent of Chinese tea! By this time it was four-thirty which meant that it had taken us six and a half hours to drive forty-five miles. That was how we ended up quite by chance at the quarters of the 214th Shock Construction Company.

That night we slept in an underground bunker, which had three exits that all led out into trenches. The wooden props which kept the ceiling up were wrapped round with rice-straw and all there was on the trestle-beds were straw mats and tiny pillows the size of a tea-cosy. Somewhere in the distance could be heard hollow booming sounds that could have been

either explosions or thunder. There was a faint rustle of falling sand.

The next morning we were introduced to the commander of the 214th Company, a young man by the name of Nguyễn Đình Thôi and his second-in-command, the pleasant roundfaced Hoàng Thi Cúc. After the introductions were over Thôi tucked an exercisebook under his arm and took us up aboveground to survey the company's encampment.

It was an overcast morning and there was a good deal of low cloud. Outside we could see wooded hills and a small village consisting of about eight to ten houses, that looked very ordinary.

"This is where the young people live, who have come out here to cultivate the area," Thôi explained. "They came out here some two years ago. As you can see the soil here isn't very promising- mangroves, swamps and jungle. A few years back you could still find wild boar and tigers in these parts."

At the present time virginlands are being opened up and cultivated by young people in many parts of the country.

Near the houses we could see groves of young banana trees and tilled plots of land. There was a large number of children running about. They were all very young and some of them quite tiny, with bare feet and bare bottoms. Some of the small girls of about five or six were carrying younger brothers and sisters on their backs. They all seemed irrepressibly jolly.

Nguyễn Đình Thôi told us about the life of his company. Its main task was to build roads through the jungle. It numbered 162 in all and 82 were women. Most of them were just out of Hoang-hoa schools.

When I asked what problems they came up

against, Thôi answered with a wry smile, saying that at the beginning there had been nothing but problems. They had had hardly any building implements and no experience which meant that their productivity level was less than half the usual norm.

But later they started to study construction techniques and knock together simple spades and wheelbarrows. The spades were made of wood and they fashioned the wheelbarrow wheels out of thick logs. The first construction project had been a road to the west of Thanh-hoa. After that they had deepened the nearby river and built dams and a canal. The constant work in water had brought many of them down with sickness.

"That was when our first rationalisation proposals appeared," Thôi recalled. "Necessity is the mother of invention. We built a mobile bamboo bridge to work from. It looked most weird, a complicated contraption unlike anything you've ever seen.

"But we got rid of sickness and work progressed three times as fast as before. At the moment we're building another road, through hills covered with dense jungle. The Americans got the wind up and started making regular flights to the area. First came the reconnaissance planes and then the bombers, which meant that we had to dig trenches at the same time as we made the road."

"We have a motto," he went on, "wherever there are people, there must be trenches."

An hour every day and a whole day once a month the company devoted to military training. The young lads and girls learnt to

Nguyễn Đình Thôi, the company commander





Construction workers at their studies

shoot and had regular target practice. A hundred members of the 162-strong company are combatant members of the People's Volunteer Corps and are equipped with guns.

"Who sees to your food supplies?" I asked Thoi.

"The state supplies us with rice and the rest we provide ourselves. We keep chickens and pigs and grow a lot of vegetables. We have six cooks who cater for us very well."

There was rice for breakfast, rice for dinner and rice for supper, but nevertheless the cooks had their hands full to make sure everyone was

fed properly. Although the dishes were all much of a muchness there was always a great deal to prepare for the large numbers.

"Our days just fly by, before you can say knife," Thi Cuc assured me. She was in charge of all the company's domestic affairs and responsible for food supplies as well.

Glazunov stayed behind in the village to do some sketching and I went off with Thoi to see how the road was being built. We went down a narrow path past the houses and allotments and then plunged into thick groves of trees. The grass-covered earth was soft and springy

Soon we'll have the road built!



underfoot, and here and there I could see patches of water. On the way Thoi told me about the work the young people were doing and quoted some output figures. Every now and then he took out his thick exercise book and read out whole pages of their pledges. Thoi was in a faded, shabby field jacket and sandals made out of pieces of car tyre.

When we came to a part of the path which led uphill I heard a strange noise which sounded like a good hundred handrails striking up their evening chorus over the swamp. The sound grew louder and louder as we made our way up a large hill. When we reached the top Thoi touched my shoulder and pointed to the next hill where an endless chain of young men and girls were pushing wooden wheelbarrows. There were two separate files moving in opposite directions: the wheelbarrows that were being pushed in the direction of the new road were piled high with stones and those that were coming uphill again were empty. We walked up to the young workers and I noticed that the wheelbarrows were of the very simplest variety: they had two wooden handles, a cross-piece and a large wooden wheel sawn out of a solid block of wood. It had been the squeaks from those wheels that had made my "handrails' chorus". I took a turn at pushing one of the loaded wheelbarrows only to find it required considerable effort and that it was difficult to keep balanced.

Along the road itself there were dozens of girls working with hoes. They were wearing black kerchiefs on their heads and on top of these large pointed straw hats. Somewhere out in front explosions could be heard, where the road was being laid through the mountains. The girls clustered round us asking questions about the Soviet Union; despite the heavy work

they were doing they all seemed cheerful and full of energy.

Thoi told them that a special concert would be laid on for their Soviet friends that evening and the news delighted them.

"So that's how we build our roads you see," Thoi commented. "Our motto is: 'Work hard, fast, economically and well'" and as I am sure you can see that's no easy task. Our working day is usually eight hours but when air-raids are going on we just work on until all the damage has been repaired."

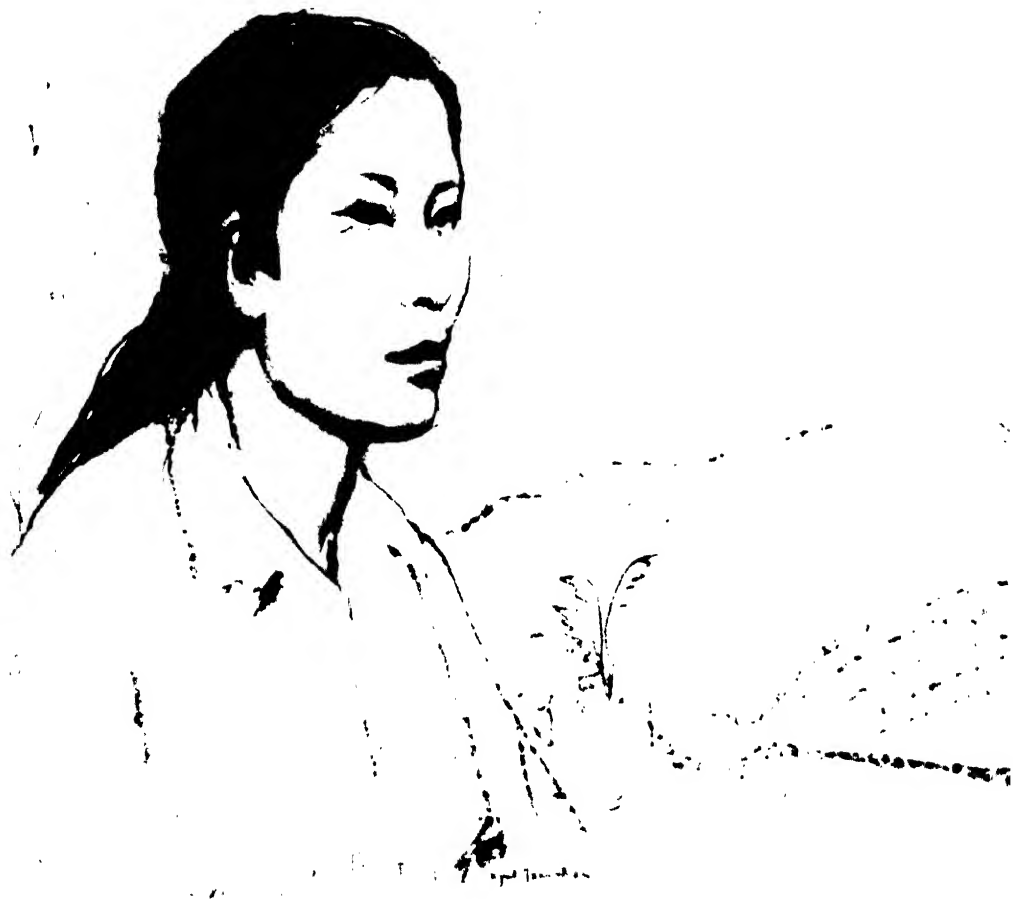
After that he showed me the dug-out where those who would be working the night shift were having lessons. The pupils were sitting on the ground and judging by the concentric circles on the make-shift blackboard it was a geometry lesson they were having.

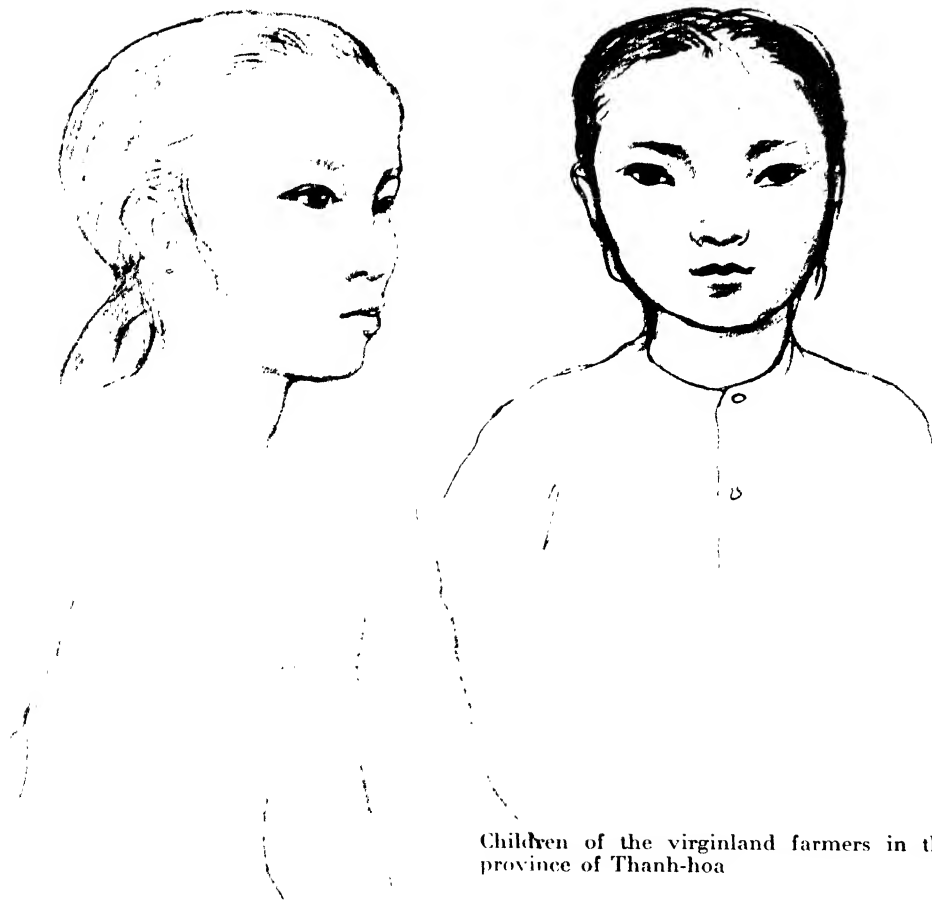
"Have I given you some idea of the problems we encounter in our work?" asked Thoi. All I could manage by way of a response to that question after all I had seen was a humble nod.

Thoi went on to explain that some eighteen months before a lot of attention had had to be devoted to re-educational work. The young people working in the company had come from all sorts of homes.

That evening a concert was given by the members of the company in their club house. The walls of the large spacious hut were hung with posters: the biggest of them all was pinned up over the stage and read: "Thanh-hoa will win through." On one of the other posters there was an algebra formula and flags hung down from the ceiling. Pieces of parachute silk had been sewn together to make a curtain. (Thoi

Hoang Thi Cuc, deputy commander of the 214th Company





Children of the virginland farmers in the
province of Thanh-hoa

proudly announced that it came from a captured American plane.)

The company marched to the club-house in an orderly file, and everyone sat down on the floor. Many of the people from the nearby villages had brought along their children. To open the proceedings everyone present, both performers and audience, sang the "March of the Shock Construction Detachments", which was a very popular song. It had been written by Do Duân, a well-known soldier-composer who had taken part in the struggle against the French. This was followed by a miniature playlet performed by a young lad and girl (who incidentally were also the authors) about the way the construction detachment had first moved stones by hand and then learnt to make wheelbarrows. The next dramatic interlude was a play about a pair of lovers who renounce personal happiness and prosperity so as to be able to take part in the common struggle. It closed with the fiancée saying to her future husband: "The time for our wedding has not yet come. We must put it off till victory-day."

While we were sitting in that club-house listening to the concert performed by those enterprising construction workers, I thought back to the theatre we had gone to in Hanoi. Here once more the whole programme was devoted to the people's struggle.

Thoi told us that many of the boys and girls in his company had taken a vow that they would not marry until the war was over.

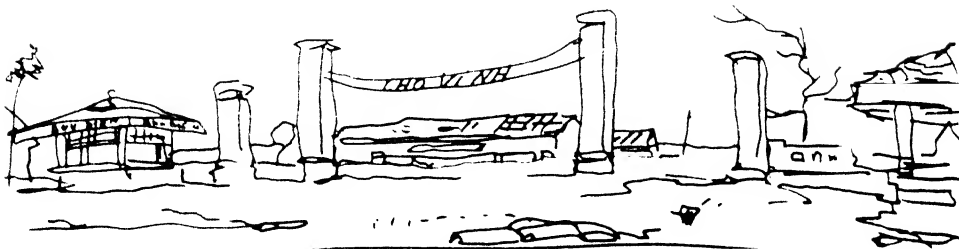
Later that evening we all sang the Russian song "Katyusha" and Ilya and I presented the company members with boxes of exercise-books and school equipment that we had brought with us. We in our turn were presented with souvenirs, small rings made of metal taken from enemy planes, and which bore the number 214.

At the end of the concert we bade the company farewell and set off once more on our way.



LET SONGS DROWN THE DIN OF BOMBS

"Vinh will win through!"—a slogan at the entrance
to the ruined capital of Ngean province



That night we slept in the province of Ngean, which borders on Laos, in a small village not far from the provincial centre Vinh. The next morning we had a couple of spare hours to ourselves so I decided to wander around to have a look at the surrounding countryside.

The village had no street. The small houses and sheds were scattered higgledy-piggledy among the banana and papaya trees, the coconut palms, and there was bamboo everywhere. There were the habitual square patterns of rice-fields stretching far away into the distance and pine-trees with long soft needles bordered the nearby canal.

From time to time boats covered with rush matting skimmed down the canal. On the opposite bank sat two small boys fishing and a small girl was washing her buffalo, that was crouched in the water immobile, reminiscent of a statue.

Ilya and I were lying stretched out on the canal embankment. It was quiet all around and although the sun was hidden by clouds there was a heat-haze. If it had not been for the distant rumbling and the pistol tucked into Thanh's belt it would have been easy to forget the war completely. Or so it seemed at first glance; but there were the cyclists with carbines slung over their shoulders and somewhat further off a number of craters in the middle of the fields of bright green rice shoots.

The house where we had spent the night was an attractive stone one with a small inner paved courtyard. The walls were decorated with bas-reliefs depicting horses (in Vietnam the horse is a symbol of erudition and prosperity). On the roof there were two stone lions with human faces bearing expressions of arrogant contempt. The house had once belonged to a rich man from those parts but was now used to house

a hotel evacuated there from the town of Vinh.

We ate our dinner in the inner courtyard in the company of Nguyễn Hien, the editor of the provincial newspaper, and Trần Tài from the local U.V.V. committee. Nguyễn gave us a detailed account of the situation in that particular province. There were a great deal of farming problems to be solved. There had been poor harvests in a number of areas owing to unfortunate weather conditions. The hot wind from Laos was disastrous for the crops and in those parts it was a frequent visitor.

Another complicated problem had beset the local authorities in the recent past, in connection with the Vietnamese custom to bury their dead in their own fields. The graves of ancestors were considered a sacred spot, but meanwhile various machines were delivered to the agricultural co-operatives which demanded space. Party organisations and the organs of administration conducted a wide propaganda campaign among the local inhabitants and eventually they managed to overcome the obstacle created by this century-old tradition. The villagers agreed to bury their ancestors' remains in a common cemetery which meant that a good deal more land was available for ploughing.

In recent years a good deal of attention has been devoted to sanitary conditions and hygiene in the villages, particularly the remote ones. A large number of wells have been sunk and bath-houses built.

That evening we left for the town of Vinh and en route we were to be confronted by a "fine" example of the American "scorched earth" policy.

Vinh had been razed to the ground before the recent hostilities even started, under the French colonial régime. Then after the victory of 1954 and the establishment of the DRV the town

had been rebuilt. Residential districts sprung up, trees were planted along the streets and parks and gardens laid out, the suburbs being equipped with all modern amenities. The population reached some 75,000 and Vinh soon became an important transport junction with an outlet to the sea and a port of considerable importance. On August 5, 1964, the first American planes loomed up over the town and it was soon destined to provide the Americans with a model testing ground for their bombing techniques. High explosive, pellet and napalm bombs were all tried out there and the inhabitants were subjected to daylight, night and dawn air raids. Sometimes they went on for whole weeks at a stretch without any let up. In 1968, 1,350 pounds of explosive for every square foot of the town's territory were dropped by the American aggressors.

We walked through deserted ruins, through gardens where the trunks of decapitated palm trees reminded one of stumps of limbs calling men to revenge. The wind lashed up dust in the streets, swirled about pieces of paper and tore at scraps of material which had caught on metal roofing. Each of the urban districts presented the same picture—ruins, ruins and more ruins. Only occasionally did we come across lone people wandering about among the wreckage of what had once most likely been their houses. There were a few lads from the shock brigades sorting out bricks. The town's Catholic cathedral still towered above the other buildings although it too was half in ruins.

Thanh took us along to the cellar of a half-ruined house and introduced us to a short, very

The Americans did all they could to wipe out Vinh but the town still shows signs of active life







thin man, Phan Văn Sác who was the vice-chairman of the town's executive committee. Văn Sác was dressed in a dark shirt with an incredible number of white buttons on it. On his head he wore a tiny cap at a rakish angle. His hands were thin and swarthy with swollen joints. His eyes had an extremely friendly, kind gleam in them.

Văn Sác then proceeded to show us round the town.

"The Americans did everything they possibly could to reduce this town to ashes," he said in a sad voice, "but life goes on."

We made our way along devastated streets to a Buddhist pagoda. In the garden next to it there were some bamboo buildings. Waves of heat wafted forth from an enormous red-hot furnace and the firelight flickered over the faces of the women and old men who were making china bowls.

"Our craftsmen have joined forces in a co-operative," Văn Sác explained. "They supply chinaware not only to the province of Ngean but to other provinces as well. We have succeeded in evacuating most industrial enterprises and they are now continuing production in the

Driving through Ngean province

jungle. But this work is important too," he said pointing to the bowls.

There were deep trenches and dug-outs round the potters' workshop and Van Sac informed us that 130 miles of trenches had been dug in the city, large bunkers built in some of which filmshows were even laid on.

We were amazed when Van Sac went on to tell us that spring Song and Dance competitions were held each year either in Vinh itself or in some other town in the province.

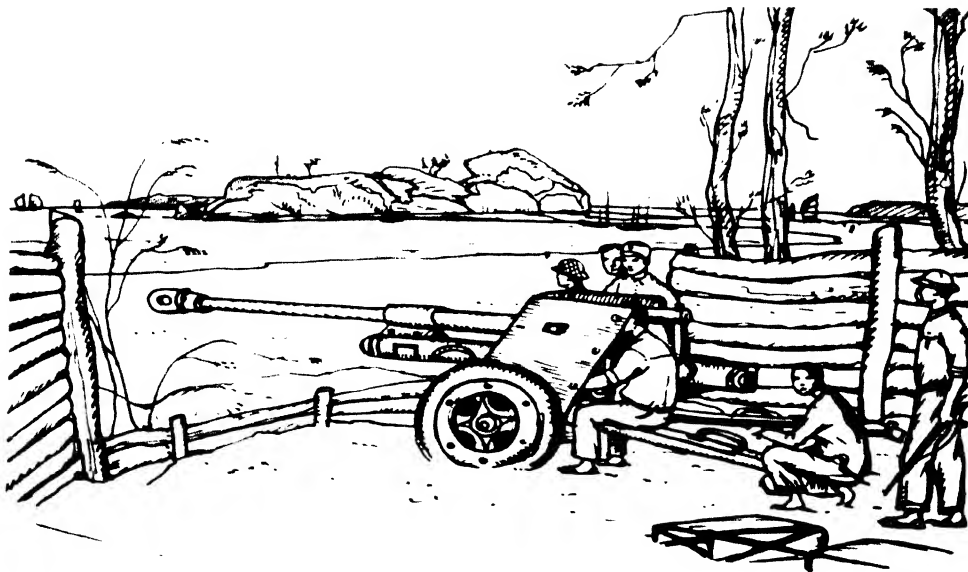
"The young people have started up a 'Let-songs-drown-the-din-of-bombs' campaign," added the vice-chairman with a laugh. "We old people, by the way, also join in the singing."

On the outskirts of Vinh



TINH JOINS THE FISHERMEN

People's Volunteers from one of the coast guard batteries



Imagine a beautiful view across the Tonkin Gulf, the estuary of the Cam River, with white foamy waves breaking on a golden beach bordered by coconut palms and with fishermen's junks sailing out to sea and disappearing in thick mist. This is what Glazunov and I saw spread before us as we sat on the breastwork of a trench next to an anti-aircraft gun at the crown of a steep hill on the shore of the gulf. Glazunov busy with his sketch-book, this time using pastels and quite oblivious to everything around him except the task in hand, while I talked to the men of the People's Volunteer Corps from the local fishermen's co-operative.

The journey to this spot the night before seemed a far-away dream. After taking our leave of Văn Sae, the vice-chairman of the Vinh executive committee, we had set off to visit this coast guard battery. We were unaware as to whether our driver had had only a hazy idea of how to get there or had been given poor directions, but the long and short of it was that we had spent the whole evening driving along coast roads full of potholes without managing to find the battery we were looking for. From time to time we stopped by some lonely hut and tried to find something out from the local peasants. They just shook their heads and asked us how we were feeling.

"A battery? Guns? No, there aren't any guns around here . . . You ought to go to the provincial centre, to the Army headquarters there and they'll tell you everything and give you a guide." That was that, one had to give these people their due, they were past masters at keeping military secrets. I recalled the "Three Don'ts" which Ho Chi Minh had called upon the people to make their golden rule when they were fighting the French: "We don't understand", "We don't know" and "We didn't hear".

Finally after dark a barrier came into view on the road ahead and two men carrying sub-machine-guns jumped out of the bushes. One of them came up to our car and the other stood waiting at the edge of the road. Usually in such cases one was asked who one was and where

We brought out our papers and one of the soldiers led us along a narrow path through the trees to the headquarters of the local detachment of the People's Volunteer Corps. On the way we passed a number of sentry-posts and finally reached a building where we were led into a spacious room and started talking to the man in charge of the district detachment of the People's Volunteer Corps, Nguyễn Văn Thuy. There were stacks of sub-machine-guns by the wall and two light machine-guns. A small kerosene lantern lit up a "Vietnam-Will-Win-Through" poster hanging on the wall. A baby's cries could be heard coming from behind a partition.

"A group of small boys came and told us an hour ago that some people in cars were driving about looking for guns," said Văn Thuy. "I had already given orders for them to hold up the vehicle and then you turn up. Ah, well . . . it's always difficult to hunt out our defence batteries, especially at night time. They are often being transferred to new sites, to set up new positions after each successful strike at the American ships. Many such sites have been prepared all along the coast," Văn Thuy assured us stretching out his hand in a wide gesture. "Ever so many . . ." Nevertheless he gave us detailed instructions as to how to find the battery we were looking for and we set off again along the sandy coast road among pine-trees. But alas! We still did not manage to find the battery that night. We lost our way several

Ученый и писатель



times and eventually ended up in some prickly bushes: it was difficult enough to scramble out of them ourselves let alone retrieve the car. I suggested that we make a log ramp to get it back on to the road, but not even Thanh knew what a "ramp" was. So I just gave a shrug and we started off down the soft dusty road in the dark. Only the drivers stayed behind to sleep in the cars.

Soon we were able to pick out palm trees at the edge of the road and the dark spurs of distant hills. Then we noticed that we were not even going along a road but a high narrow dam between rice-fields. Somewhere in the distance we could make out a regular hollow sound, that grew louder and louder until at last we realised that it was the noise of the waves beating against the shore. Hya and I did not even ask our guides where they were taking us. Several times we had to jump across deep trenches and I remembered the Party slogan the commander of the construction company had told us about: "Wherever there are people, there must be trenches." So I assumed to myself that wherever there were trenches people would also not be far away.

That was how we came to an agricultural co-operative on the shore of the Tonking Gulf. No Russians had ever had a glimpse of the place before and the peasants were very pleased at the unexpected visit.

It was during our visit to the co-operative that we met a girl called Tinh on a hill outside the village among a group of People's Volunteer Corps members. Like all the rest of them she was dressed in a khaki uniform and she was just as friendly as the others and if anything

A girl weaving a cam (rice-straw hat)

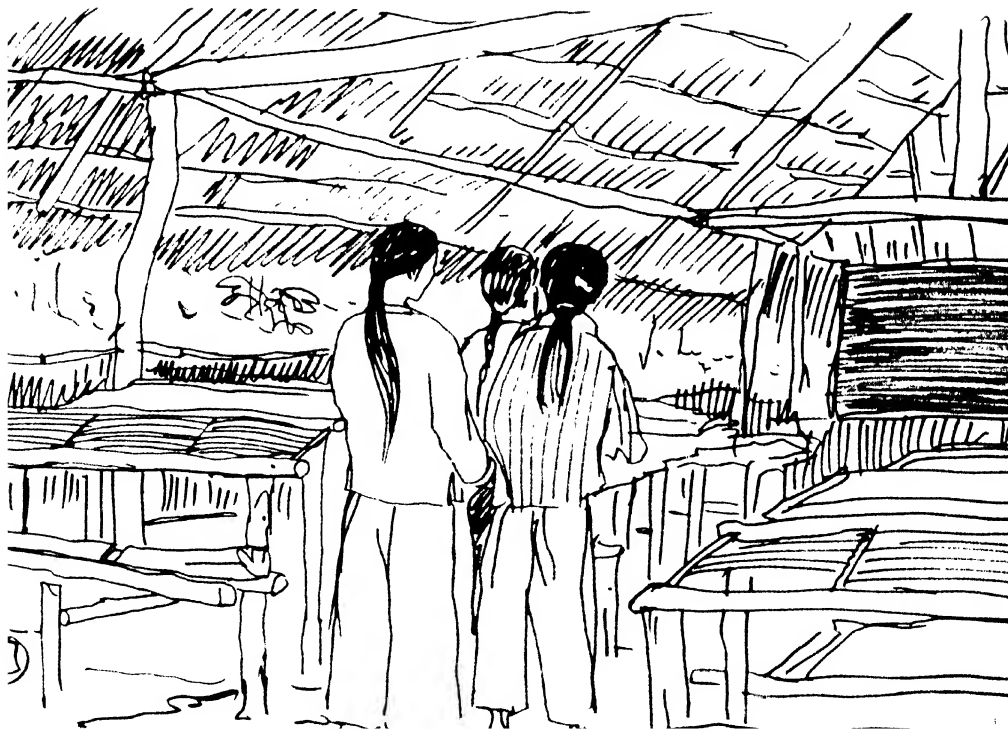


Peasants from the coast



A voluntary self-defence detachment

A classroom under a canopy of banana leaves





An old peasant-woman

still more forthcoming. She started to tell us about the day-to-day life of the local fishermen, casting a swift glance from time to time at Glazunov who by that time was hard at work on her portrait.

I had first heard her name from Văn Sac. Tinh had been the first woman in the province of Ngean to break a century-old tradition and go out to sea with the fishermen to help bring in the catch. She had proved her usefulness, keeping up with the old salts every inch of the way, and her example had later been followed by many other girls and women.

At the end of the previous year the Americans had taken her prisoner together with other fishermen and she had spent three months in prison. There had been interrogations with beatings and attempts had been made to bribe her to tell them about the coastal fortifications. Tinh had bravely held her tongue though, just like the other fishermen, and eventually the enemies had let them go, loading them up with fabrics, transistor radio-sets and children's toys, all of which they had thrown into the sea.

On her return Tinh had joined a volunteer self-defence detachment. "Look," she said, pointing to a machine-gun, "that's mine."

Without any warning a shrill whistle suddenly burst upon us. Before I realised what was happening the Vietnamese all rushed to the machine-gun. Then I grasped what the noise was all about. A plane was flying in from the sea, hidden by thick, low clouds. One of the gun

Fisher-girl Tinh



9000 1100 PM 21/10/1967



The smooth waters of the river Cam flow down to the sea

crew shouted: "Reconnaissance plane!" With a ghastly roar, coming straight for us, the plane passed overhead but the young Vietnamese did not shoot at it. There was no point in wasting ammunition, firing at an invisible target. The roar grew fainter and in the distance we heard some anti-aircraft guns start up over in the direction in which the plane had been heading. I thought to myself that they must have been equipped with radar over there.

"We brought one of those down last year,"

said Tinh pointing downhill to an enormous yawning crater. "After that no planes flew over our hill for several months."

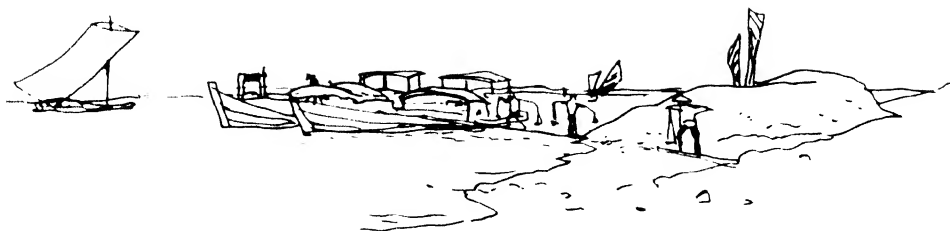
Not all the members of the co-operative were connected with fishing. The chairman showed us workshops where nets were made and where those attractive pointed hats were woven from rice-straw.

Before we left the village we presented some of the gifts entrusted to us by Soviet Young Pioneers to the schoolchildren of the co-operative.



BOYS FROM THE COAST

Cargo-barges in the gul

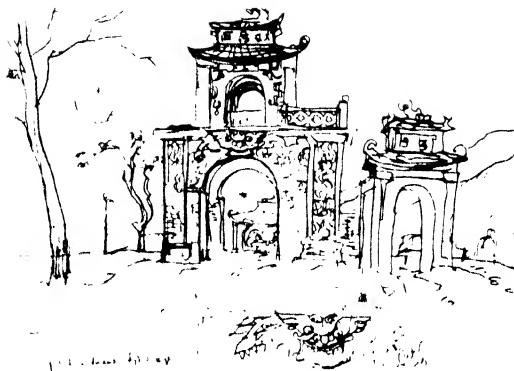


The co-operative's school had long since been blown to bits by shells from American war-ships off the coast. The Catholic church and the Buddhist pagoda had met a similar fate; all stone buildings had been completely destroyed, even the concrete vats for salting fish.

The co-operative chairman led us into some dense bamboo and coconut groves and there, beneath a large canopy of banana leaves held up on six thick bamboo canes, lessons were in progress. The young teacher Nguyễn Văn Hoàng was giving the third class a reading lesson. The children were sitting on rough-hewn benches, their books open on their laps. There were several deep trenches leading from the "classroom" into the trees in various directions.

The children greeted us in friendly fashion and were obviously quite sincerely thrilled to see us. When we handed them boxes containing exercise-books, satchels and pencils their joy knew no bounds. We tied red Pioneer ties round the necks of the star pupils. While we were talking to the schoolchildren explosions boomed not far away. There were no shots to be heard, only explosions which meant that the ships were a long way from the shore. Ever since some American ships had been damaged by fire in the recent past they had not dared come close to the coast.

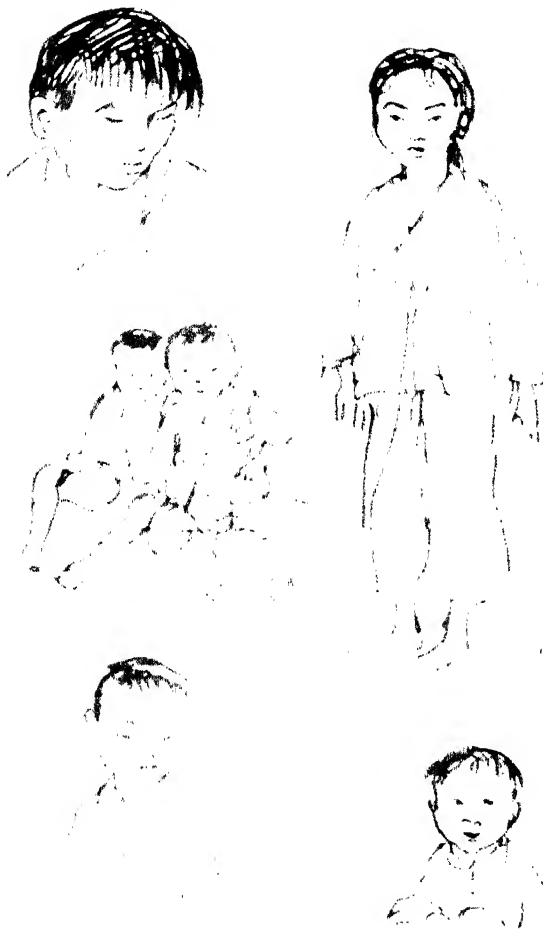
The bombardment grew louder and louder but the children did not turn a hair. But eventually the teacher decided it was time to lead the class out into the trenches and we went along with them. As soon as the shooting started to die down Glazomov sat down to draw surrounded by a crowd of peasants and children, while I, despite all Thanh's warnings, went to swim in the gulf. I felt I could not possibly leave the Gulf of Tonking without having at least one dip in it. The children followed me



A Buddhist temple in ruins

down to the water in a laughing cluster, some of them holding on to my hands. Some were even carrying my brothers or sisters on their backs although they themselves were no more than five . . . We all walked down the village street, and across a small inlet of the river in a stony spit.

Those children were incredibly cheerful and friendly. Their eyes were shining with excitement as they talked to me, each one trying to



show how pleased he was to see me. However they made it quite impossible for me to carry out my "wicked" plan inconspicuously. Instead of getting down to the sea without being heard there was noise and singing all the way. The "scouts" dancing along in front shouted loudly and proudly to everyone we passed: "Soviet, Soviet"--pointing me out to them all.

As we walked along the little boys gave me various souvenirs, one a shell of weird shape, another a piece of coral and a third a large crab. Soon I had no more room in my pockets.

The beach which had looked attractive from a distance turned out to be a real little paradise. The water was calm and the large-grained sand was unbelievably clean.

After giving my camera, notebooks and biro to the children for safe-keeping, I started to undress and the boys let out a whelp of glee. They had obviously been wondering whether I was finally going to take the plunge or not.

The water was warm and clear. Squatting down on the sand the boys commanded the "operation".

"You mustn't go over there, there's a deep pit," one shouted.

"Don't swim out too far," another warned, "there may be sharks around."

"Come out quickly, or they might start shooting!" cried a third anxiously.

Boys from the coast

I myself was feeling worried by that time for the crowd of boys on the beach was much too big for comfort. The Americans might notice them and then heaven knows what sad end there might be to our spree....

When Glazunov and I left the co-operative the boys insisted that I photograph them. They squatted down, with expressions of serious concentration on their faces. Only the creases at the corners of their eyes betrayed all that mischievous, irrepressible merriment that could burst to the surface any moment.

An hour later the ships of the Seventh Fleet started bombarding that strip of coast again. Whining shells flew over the village and exploded somewhere beyond the next hill. Meanwhile life went on as usual in the village: the merry shouts of the children still rang out, one of them started crying when his little huddies hurt his feelings, another one burst into peals of laughter. Little girls were weeding the allotments and by that time there was such a crowd of children clustering round Ilya Glazunov that I had difficulty in pushing my way through to him. Once again I thought back to beleaguered Leningrad, the German shells whistling over the streets and exploding in the distance and the small boys who paid no notice to them. We too had had a sixth sense for the vital moment when it was time to take cover in an archway or bomb-shelter. War-time children are the same the world over, wise beyond their years, but children all the same, despite hunger, bombs and shells.

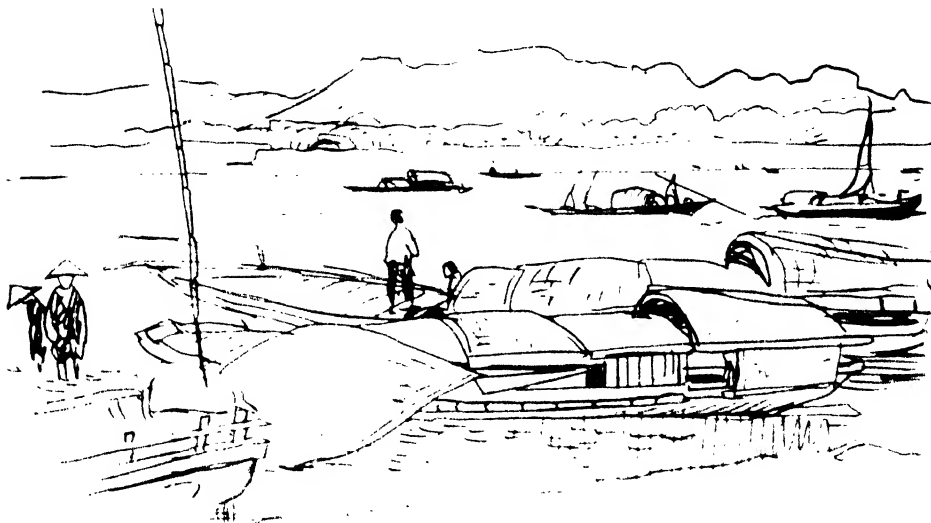


GRANDFATHER HO'S FINEST GRANDCHILDREN

A rally of "Grandfather Ho's Finest Grandchildren" was one of the more unexpected events of our visit to Vietnam; it was being held in the village of Sen in the Nam Lien district.

The village hall was a large bamboo building and filled to capacity for the occasion. The audience consisted of children in the main. There were also a good number of children among those sitting on the stage, between the ages of

A crossing over the river Lam



1968-1969
Central District
1968-1969
District 10



seven and twelve, no more. Some of them could hardly see over the table at which they were sitting.

A boy with a bandaged arm rose to speak, or rather sing. I should point out that in general Vietnamese speak in a singsong voice with drawn-out vowels. That particular little chap had such a resonant timbre to his voice that I immediately jumped to the conclusion that he was singing. The organisers of the rally told us that the boy's parents had been killed in a bombing raid and that he himself had already been wounded. He was eleven years old and in his third year at school.

Then a tiny little slip of a girl came out on to the platform with thick hair parted in the middle. She was also in her third year at school, and one of the star pupils in her class. Every day she used to look after the family buffalo. She had also fattened up three chickens, sold them to the state and bought textbooks for school on the proceeds. She talked rapidly but the expression on her face was serious, verging on the stern.

Pioneers and schoolchildren, who had been picked out as "Grandfather Ho's Finest Grandchildren" after a tough competition, had come to this rally from all over the province. Apart from good marks in academic subjects each one had proved himself industrious and persevering in other spheres, taking part in work in the fields, looking after domestic animals and helping the adults in all manner of ways. One of the children present at this rally of "Grandfather Ho's Grandchildren" was actually a great-nephew of Ho Chi Minh's.

Adults present at the meeting, including a Hero of Labour, a soldier and a girl worker from a shock construction detachment, gave the children a big hand.



NAME: TRU. YUEN

1945-1946

One of the girls
attending the rally
"Grandfather Ho's
Finest Grand-
children"



The house where the rally was held

It was no haphazard coincidence that the rally was being held in that particular district, for it was in the part of the country where the late President had actually grown up. Hya and I made the most of this opportunity to visit the house of Ho Chi Minh's father. It was a small house with a straw roof almost hidden by greenery. It was simple and unpretentious in the extreme with an earthen floor like those to be found in peasants' houses. On the wall hung pictures of Ho Chi Minh's father, elder brother and sister. A large shelf bearing two candlesticks served as an altar for ancestor worship. There was also a large plank bed and underneath it I caught sight of grass growing up through the closely packed earth.

When Ho Chi Minh had been eleven years old his father became Doctor of Literature (2nd Class) but nevertheless he was still unable to feed his family satisfactorily. The house and adjacent grounds had been presented to him by fellow-villagers. At one time Ho Chi Minh's father had even been governor of the province but he had not long been in that post before he shut himself away from the outside world in the Nam Bô Buddhist monastery, where he was later to die.

All this we were told by Nguyễn Sinh Thơm, a nephew of Ho Chi Minh whom we met in the museum.

Before we left the museum I leafed through the Visitors' Book where I found signatures of Soviet scientists Bukharov and Dmitrichenko, geologists Lavrin, Ostanyvsky and Revenko, a Soviet delegation from Georgia and a visiting student party. There was no end to the variety.

Heroes of Labour paid a visit to the young people





of towns which appeared in the address column. Friends of Vietnam from Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia also appeared in the list of visitors.

When we left the museum we set off for the nearest crossing over the river Lam. It was The house where Ho Chi Minh's parents lived

nearly dark by the time we caught sight of the silhouette of a half-ruined edifice of unusual shape at the roadside. Figures of men carved in stone stood out against the crimson sunset and here we were confronted with yet another sad example of twentieth-century vandalism. The statues were part of a Buddhist pagoda which had been hit by two bombs. In addition



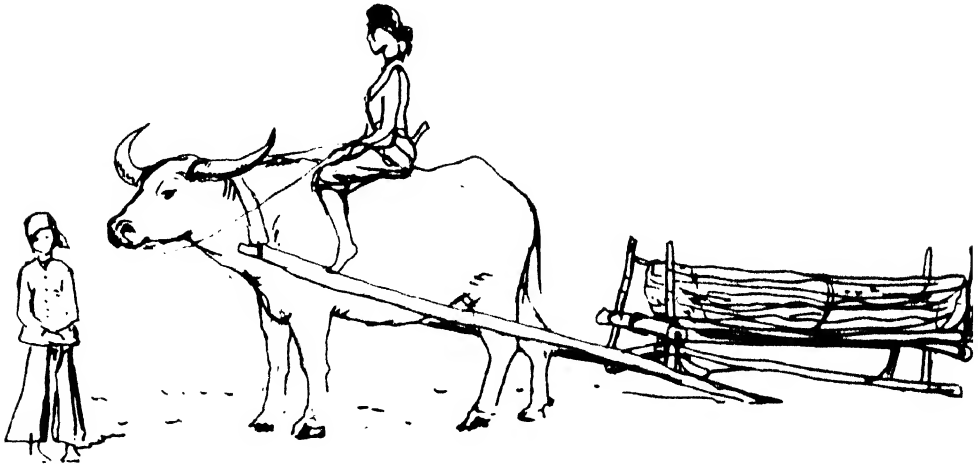
there were a number of fresh craters at distances of no more than three to four hundred feet from the pagoda. Judging by the ruins it must have been a building of exquisite beauty.

The frescoes, gilding, mountains of shattered sculpture and broken utensils used for religious rites were a site to fill anyone with horror. By some miracle three large statues were still intact. One showed a woman sitting bent in grief over the child in her arms; the impact of the carving was so powerful that if it had not been for the enormous scale one might have taken the figure for real-life grief. The other two statues were stone figures of war-chieftains with grim, stern faces with brows sloping up diagonally over

their foreheads, and their eyes staring into the crater made by the explosion.

For miles around there were no houses and no anti-aircraft batteries, nothing but wooded hills and a river in the distance. Neither was the road one of any importance, merely a dusty track. Clearly the bombs had not hit the pagoda by mistake instead of another target, they had been dropped on purpose.

We wandered among the ruins for some time, thunderstruck by the shameless barbarism. How terrible it would be if a similar fate were in store for all monuments of Vietnamese culture preserved over the centuries, monuments which bear witness to the people's rare artistic talents.



THE FLOOR IS YOURS, RAY MEDRY

A pellet bomb robbed this peasant of his hand



The night after our visit to that ruined temple we managed for the first occasion for quite some time to really have our sleep-out, while Le Thanh went off somewhere to telephone Hanoi to report that we were alive and well and would soon be back in the capital.

We drove about the devastated streets of Thanh-hoa lined with piles of bricks. All that remained of the town's main hospital were the stone gate-posts sporting red crosses. Beyond them nothing but ruins and craters filled with green duckweed. The word large could not possibly be applied any more to that hospital. Ordinary houses and a small administrative building which had been once the headquarters of the district committee were being used as wards.

Doctor Doan Lê Giang, who was in charge of the local ambulance brigade, showed us round the hospital. He himself was a surgeon and had graduated from Hanoi Medical School in 1961.

Ambulance brigades had been set up immediately after the Americans had started bombing North Vietnam. The ambulances were more or less constantly on call and a particularly large number of the patients the brigade's staff treated were those hit by pellet bombs.

We were shown round wards that were very crowded and where there was hardly any space between the beds. A doctor was taking the pulse of a man whose face was ashen grey and who was moaning in a half-conscious state. He had been wounded nine days previously by a pellet bomb. Doctor Lê Giang explained to us that wounds from pellet bombs were very difficult to treat. Apparently it was difficult to extract the pellets and X-rays had to be used for that work.

In the next bed there was a woman propped up on bolsters, a certain Nguyễn Thị Dạng who

had been wounded by a pellet bomb in the back. A pellet had got into her stomach and she was in a very serious condition, after having to undergo a kidney operation and have rents in her intestinal tract sewn up.

The doctor sighed as he recalled that dreadful day when this woman patient had been brought in. Three separate districts had been bombed at one and the same time. There was no end to the pellet bombs, and no end to the wounded.

All our doctors, G.P.s, pediatricians and all the rest of the hand, have all had to take up surgery," the doctor commented. "Otherwise it would be impossible to cope."

In another ward we saw a fifteen-year-old boy called Le Van Thao, whose parents had both been killed in an air raid. He himself had been wounded in the throat, his face had been horribly disfigured and his hands paralysed. He had not yet recovered from the terrifying experiences he had been through and the doctor added that there was no guarantee he would necessarily do so in future.

We walked through several other wards, as well and everywhere we were confronted with disfigured, suffering men, women, children and old people. What barbarians and cynics those men must be who systematically and methodically go out of their way to annihilate Vietnam's civilian population! Many are the villages they have bombed which contain no factories and not even a single brick building, nothing but peasants' huts.

Another of the patients whose case history we were told about was 80-year-old Trinh Thi Xu from the district of Khanh Suong. Over a year before she had been wounded while actually lying in bed during a night raid on her village. A pellet bomb had punctured her intestines in 12 places and her legs had been broken

into the bargain. The old woman had had to be operated on the spot in an ill-equipped, makeshift operating theatre because she would not have survived the journey to hospital. However just before our visit an X-ray had revealed that one pellet was still inside her.

Near her lay a young boy Lê Văn Luân with his right hand all bandaged and next to him a worker from an agricultural co-operative called Đỗ Trĩ Sơn whose eyes set in a dark exhausted face had a distant expression about them. He had suffered severe shell-shock in an artillery bombardment and lost an arm.

Doctor Lê Giang went on to show us an enormous shell-splinter which had been extracted from an old man's hip. The patient's face had also been disfigured with a mass of small gashes.

"Wounded are brought in nearly every day and it is very difficult to find room for them. Operations are going on all the time without a let-up," said Lê Giang. "But each time they bring in yet another disfigured patient, your blood boils. You start operating and involuntarily think to yourself, O, for a gun or a bayonet, or just to get at them with my bare hands, to repay them for all the blood they have shed and the men and women they have crippled."

That reminded me all of a sudden of a meeting with another surgeon in a completely different setting. While visiting the United States in 1964 I spent a week as the guest of surgeon Ray Medry and his family in Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina, where golden autumn was having its last fling in early November. The presidential elections were going on at the time and all American cities were in the throes of the over-dramatised campaign. We were all sitting watching television, I remember, to see how the song and dance would end. Every

five minutes figures showing the total of votes for Johnson and Goldwater were flashed across the screen. My host Ray Medry and his family were all staunch Johnson supporters. They were impressed by his outward calm and promises of appeasement. Medry commented: "It's Southeast Asia, Vietnam, that has me most worried. Goldwater will make us go on fighting. I wonder whether Johnson will show some common sense."

As it turned out Johnson did not show any, and neither did Nixon after him.

Medry had spent several years in his time as a surgeon in the US Navy, but it was obvious that he hated the military for all he was worth. He did not want his own generation and his growing sons to have to go through a new war. Yet for several years at a stretch America had been waging one of the dirtiest wars man had ever seen, against the wishes of the Medry family and those of millions of "ordinary" Americans. Or perhaps not really against their wishes? Perhaps it was with the bewildered connivance of some and the silent consent of others? I could not shut that thought out from my mind as we walked from bed to bed looking at those wounded Vietnamese who had suffered so much as a result of the crimes against humanity perpetrated by "ordinary" Americans who were serving as US bomber-pilots and sailors in Vietnam.

We walked through the wards looking at the ashen faces of the wounded old people and children and I wished I could have shown that experienced American surgeon who had been disturbed by the events in Southeast Asia what confronted us there. If he had not yet become an active opponent of the war in Vietnam that sight would have made him a more resolute opponent of the war. Perhaps Ray Medry would



AP/WIDE WORLD

Eighty-year-old Trinh Thi Nu who received twelve stomach wounds during a bombing raid

have even realised that it was immaterial who the next US President would be and what promises he made to his voters during the election campaign.

Many "average Americans" perhaps consider that their non-acceptance of the policy to escalate the war in Indo-China is quite enough, maintaining that wars are made by soldiers and generals and that they are not responsible for what the former do.

The Vietnamese have a proverb which provides a most apt reply to the above attitude: "If you soil your hands your face will be dirty too."

However I would like to think that the majority of Americans regard the war their country is waging in Vietnam as the most tragic moral defeat America has ever known.

The shootings that break out on the streets of American cities, between different groups of Americans, when members of the National Guard and the police harass students, and the blood of those who actively oppose the "dirty war" are ample proof of this. Now it is up to you, Ray Medry, to you, "ordinary Americans".

Doctor Lê Giang's eyes were bloodshot and he seemed very tired as he spoke to us. As soon as the next call came in, without a second's delay he would be off in a car or on a bicycle hurrying to the new wounded.

The barbarians did not spare even the Thanh-hoa hospital







Bomb victims



THREE STATES OF READINESS

Members of the Ho Chi Minh Union of Working Yo



After a journey we would never forget we found ourselves back in Hanoi once more. Since our last sojourn in the capital another guest from Moscow had appeared at our hotel, namely the poet Yevgeny Dolmatovsky. He told us that there had been a great deal of air-raid warnings in Hanoi during the past few days. Comrades from the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries came to look at the sketches Glazunov had made during our trip. Judging by their reactions they were favourably impressed. Ilya was indeed a very quick worker and during those weeks he had made a large number of sketches. A proposal was made that they be exhibited in the capital's exhibition hall.

We later had the opportunity to meet Vu Quang, the First Secretary of the UWY Central Committee. We handed him the balls of kadir, authorising him to receive gifts from the Komsomol Central Committee. They included two film projectors, a number of GAZ 69 lorries, transistor radio sets and much else besides.

We also discussed the impressions we had gleaned in the course of our trip.

"The Americans will be obliged to leave South Vietnam," Vu Quang asserted in tones of profound conviction. "They are incapable of overpowering us when it comes to guerilla warfare. That is where even their all-powerful technology is not going to help them out. Take for instance the much publicised B-52 raids. To hit a well-camouflaged guerilla unit hidden away in the hills or the jungle from one of those is like asking a heron way up in the sky, pardon the expression, to shit into a bottle. We have amassed colossal experience in guerilla warfare by now."

The First Secretary asked us detailed questions about the work of the Komsomol in the Soviet

Union. He showed particular interest in the fostering of patriotic ideals among Soviet youth, military training for young people, the campaign for economy and thrift in industry and agriculture organised by Soviet youth and the work of voluntary "Spotlight" groups who set themselves the task of combating deficiencies and shortcomings in the work and moral conduct of Komsomol members.

"The Vietnamese are a thrifty people," Vu Quang went on. "At the present time we have to be particularly economical, take stock of every gram of rice, every ton of coal. Our struggle makes imperative strict inventories and control of distribution. This is why we are interested in the work of the Komsomol 'Spotlight' groups."

In the course of that morning several radio announcements were made to the effect that American planes had appeared in the neighbourhood of Hanoi but there were no air-raid signals so they must have changed course after all.

At the end of our talk with Vu Quang I asked him to tell us in more detail about the youth movement in Vietnam which went by the name of "Three States of Readiness". Vu Quang had just started to answer my question when the sirens struck up. He shrugged his shoulders and said: "For all our guests there is one rule in these circumstances and one rule only: to make sure they are out of harm's way. I am afraid you will have to send me your questions in writing and I shall answer them by letter." Later I received the following account of the movement and its work:

The movement known as the "Three States of Readiness" was started up by the Hanoi section of the UWY and then spread through the rest of the country at the speed of lightning.







A strong sense of patriotism is something which distinguishes Vietnamese youth as a whole, and this explains why four million young men and girls throughout the Republic enthusiastically took part in this movement. The "Three States of Readiness" are:

"Readiness to fight the enemy, to fight heroically and to join the armed forces;

"Readiness to overcome all difficulties, expand production and work and study in any conditions;

"Readiness to set off and travel to any part of the country where our Homeland may have need of us and to carry out any work."

Members of the UYW and other young people who joined this movement set themselves concrete objectives, for example, to be ready to fight requires not merely a profound understanding of what one is fighting for and for what goals. It is vital to possess sufficient knowledge and strength to carry out the tasks this involves. Young people must be in good physical trim and undergo detailed military training. We encourage training in five sports and defence skills: running, jumping, swimming, shooting and cudgel wrestling. Our youth must steel itself for the tasks ahead and have "bronze legs and steel shoulders".

Members of the "Three States of Readiness" movement are always to be found in the most responsible posts in our factories which we consider just as vital a part of the war effort as the frontline itself. Even when they are at the bench or out in the fields young people do not part with their rifles.

Members of the movement compete among themselves to harvest five tons of rice per hectare in all agricultural co-operatives.

The members of the movement include school-children, students and teachers.

As you drive along our roads, if something ever happens to your car, if the engine breaks down or you are fired at by enemy planes for instance, all you have to do is to signal with a whistle or three shots and men and girls from shock construction detachments will at once come to your assistance. The tens of thousands of young people who joined these detachments are always ready to carry out any task in the struggle against the American aggressors to help save their native country. They work on a strictly voluntary basis without demanding financial remuneration for their work.

We see this work as important in that it helps steel our youth, it provides a school of communism. In these detachments young people are given political training and ample opportunities to extend their technical and military skills and broaden their cultural horizons. They also arrange the domestic aspects of their lives themselves.

In its work to promote the "Three States of Readiness" movement the Union of Working Youth is educating and forging determined soldiers of revolution. In the course of the war against the American aggressors our Union has gained 800 thousand new members, and now has a total membership of two million.

We are resolved to wage a tenacious fight against the American aggressors if it requires five, ten, twenty years or even longer. Despite the sacrifices and the tremendous problems involved we will continue this fight to a victorious conclusion.

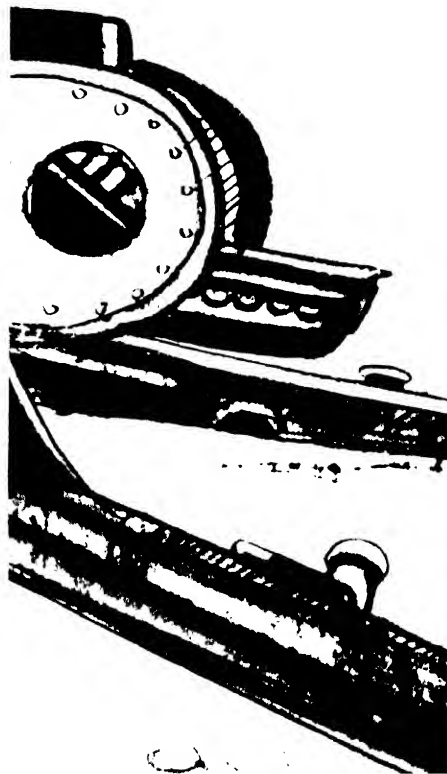
During our trip to Zone IV Hya Glazunov and I had had the chance to see for ourselves that the "Three States of Readiness" aspired after by Vietnamese youth were far more than a mere



slogan. They amounted to a clearly defined programme which young people adhered to with unshakable resolve everywhere—at work, at their studies and when actually fighting. In the Vietnam of today when a cruel, grim struggle is being fought for man's dearest possession—for freedom for every single Vietnamese, in the fullest sense of the word—all ideas and all interests fuse together in a unanimous will to win through.

Before we left the capital Glazunov and I visited an outdoor exhibition where shot-down American planes were on display. Heaps of twisted aluminium decorated with white stars was all that remained of the formidable monsters. It was with a strange feeling of hate and pride that the Vietnamese gazed upon that airplane graveyard; hatred for the enemy and pride in the accomplishments of their country's defenders. The only thing these dead piles of metal were still any good for was perhaps to provide material for souvenir rings.

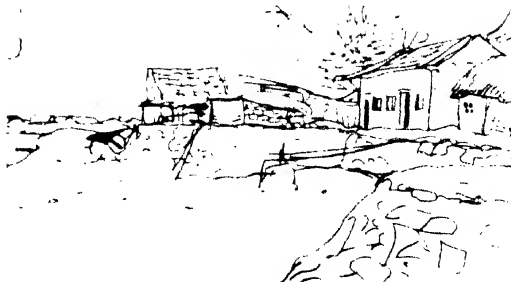
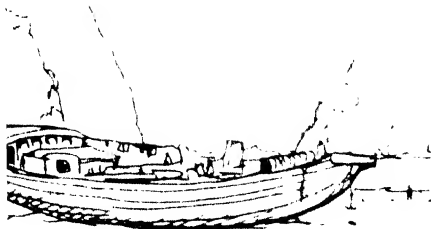
During our visit to the 214th Construction Company I had noticed that a ramp consisting of branches and the wing of a captured plane had been put down to help us drive out of the swamp.





ON THE SHORE OF THE HALONG GULF

The Poetry Hill in Hongay

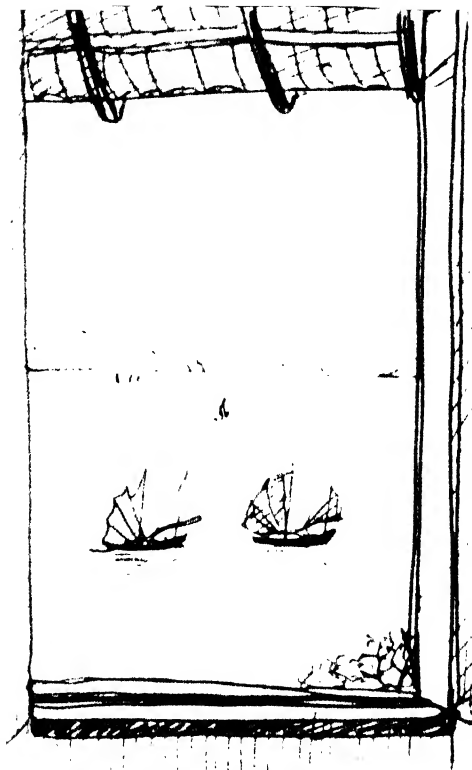


Our first stop after leaving Hanoi the second time was Hongay, a port situated on the shore of the Halong Gulf which serves the coal industry. Route No 5, which also leads to Haplong, took us there. On the way we passed various reinforced-concrete fortifications, which as a rule were set up on small elevations. They seemed quite deserted. It appeared they had been built by the French as observation posts for their soldiers who were afraid to peep outside the thick concrete walls. When their duty shifts came to an end the French soldiers used to set off to Hanoi to live it up for a week. Behind the pillbox we saw a mountain of empty bottles. There were thousands of them with faded labels of every kind under the sun.

"Their only comfort," said Le Thanh. "How else could they while the time away? Unless, of course, guerillas should suddenly spring up from nowhere, but dealing with them was a dangerous pastime."

At two o'clock that afternoon we stopped for a bite on the shore of Halong Gulf. The beauty of the spot had me at a loss for words. On the left were hills covered with dwarf pine trees and to the right the gulf dotted with fishermen's junks sporting brightly coloured sails. Out of the water towered tall cliffs blurred by a misty haze and reminiscent of a dragon's arched back. Halong means gulf of the dragon, departing beneath the waves. The air was full of a strong smell of iodine, wet seaweed and fish, mingled with the smell of smoke for it was the time of day when the fishermen's wives were cooking dinner for the family on board the junks or on the shore of the gulf. Glazunov refused to budge until he had sketched the unforgettable

e, meanwhile I walked along the beach over stones and slippery seaweed. Among the shells



The view from our hotel window over Halong Gulf

August 25/26 1967



and mollusks could be seen endless bomb splinters.

When we were within a short distance of Hongay itself we came across what had once been a holiday resort on the shore of the gulf, complete with modern-style villas and large houses. All of them were half in ruins and the red tiled roofs that had not yet collapsed completely were riddled with bomb and shell holes.

Devastated Hongay was a sorry sight to behold. Judging by the ruins the town's Catholic church had been an extremely large building. It had only been bombed a few days before we saw it, when the evening service was only just over and not all the members of the congregation had left for home. Fourteen people had been killed in the falling wreckage. On top of the heaps of bricks and twisted metal girders were lying enormous crosses and bells that would

never ring out again. By some freak the altar had not been touched. In one of the niches that was still intact stood the statue of a saint in brightly coloured garments and with a gentle smile on his face, and on the steps at his feet lay a figure of Christ with the hands broken off.

Near the church workers were clearing the wreckage of bombed houses. As I looked at the church in ruins I recalled the half-ruined church in Vinh, the wrecked church in the village of Bac Son and the Buddhist pagoda on the banks of the river Tie. Was it for missions such as these that American priests sent their flock on its way with their blessings?!

The wicked cruelty perpetrated by the Americans in Vietnam must not go unpunished. Each child that has perished, each old woman that has been crippled, each family that has been rendered homeless, the towns and villages that have been razed to the ground and the churches and pagodas smashed to smithereens will all bear witness to the crimes that have been committed when those directly responsible and those who were the brains behind them are called to account. And with each day that hour of reckoning is drawing nearer.

Next to the quays where coal is loaded in Hongay is a factory where it is first graded. To get to this factory we had to make a large detour round the town for a large number of streets had been cordoned off. The day before a number of bombs had been dropped in the area and two of them had not exploded. Mine-disposal squads were now busy on the scene. The workers at the factory also called our attention to freshly dug-over bomb craters between the railway tracks leading out of the grading sheds.

"There's an unexploded bomb right here," commented one of the workers, who was showing

us round, pointing to the ground immediately beneath us. "The mine-disposal men say that it won't explode because it went in very deep and has broken in two. If we started digging down to it now we would hold work up for a whole day. It will have to stay put!" he said with a laugh.

The grading shed we went into was dark from the coal-dust that filled the air, and covered the walls and the clothes and faces of the women working inside. The odd ray of sun filtered through a large crack in one of the walls and bare electric bulbs from the ceiling shed a dim glow on the proceedings. An endless stream of coal was moving down the conveyor, gleaming black on its way. The grading machines made a tremendous din and clatter. The foreman shouted something in our direction, pointing first to one then to another of the girls on the job, evidently attempting to introduce them to us, but we were unable to make out a single word. The girls smiled in greeting and only their teeth gleamed white in the darkness.

Some of the women working there had guns strapped to their backs and others first-aid kits across their shoulders. The work was being carried out with a rapid steady rhythm. They were all working very hard, as if to get as much done as possible before the next air-raid warning sounded.

Luu Văn Truong, the foreman of the grading shed, and Dao Viêt Cau, the leader of the factory's People's Volunteers, all of a sudden dived into what looked like a black cave, making signs for us to follow them. We made our way down an underground passage finding our bearings with the help of a light flickering far ahead. First we groped our way along. But afterwards we got used to the darkness and were able to pick out large rooms leading off both

sides of the corridor. There were people sleeping on some of the beds we could see in them.

"Those are the members from the People's Volunteer Corps who work the night shift. They don't always have time to get home between shifts while the raids are coming thick and fast, and anyway many of them live in villages some distance from the town."

In some of the other underground rooms we saw stacks of guns and piles of packing-cases and various types of equipment.

"It took some time before we had these underground quarters dug out and ready," the foreman went on. "But now all the workers to a man have time to take proper shelter even





Hongay: the tree known as the Dragon's Eye

The parishioners of the Catholic church in Hongay were among those who suffered during an American air raid







Workers from the coal-grading depot in Hongay - People's Volunteers





Hongay

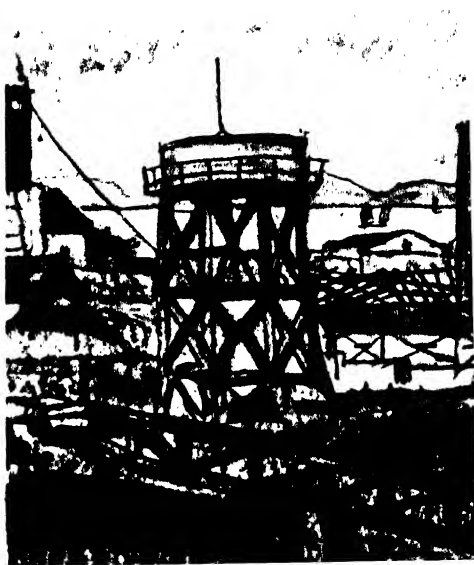
during the most sudden raids. Overhead there is a hill, a really enormous one! The men from the People's Volunteer Corps can run out through the underground passage to take up their positions and ward off enemy attacks and, in cases of emergency, we can work down here as well."

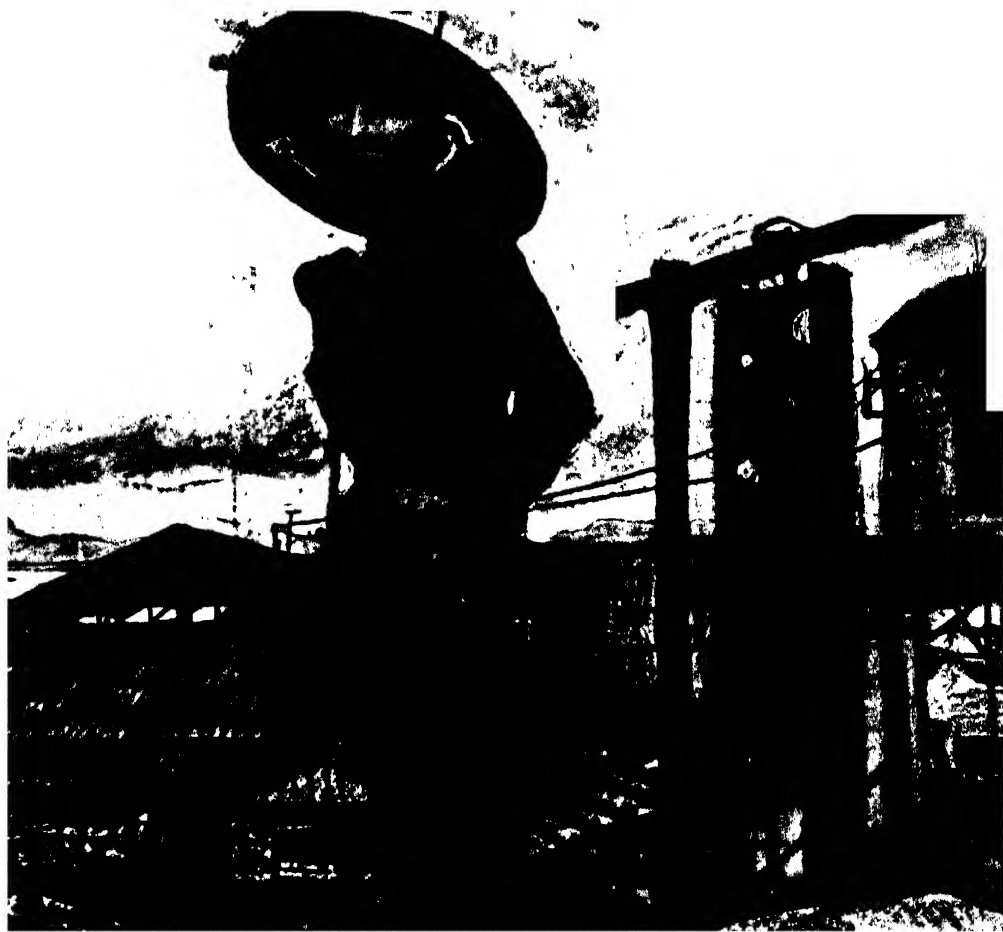
After we had been shown round we made our way slowly up to ground-level again. It was a relief to see blue sky overhead again. We were then taken over to an elevated look-out post in one of the nearby trenches manned by People's Volunteers, from where we could see Poetry Hill, the Gulf of Halong and a town half in ruins. From our new vantage point the enormous tip-up lorries loaded with coal looked tiny; the world's finest ash-free anthracite starts out on its way to countries hundreds of miles away.

The same evening we were visited by a group of young Vietnamese from the provincial youth committee. They came to ask us about life in the Soviet Union and to talk about things in general. The air-raid sirens started up five or six times in the course of the evening. Since the aircraft-carriers were so near it took the planes no more than ten or fifteen minutes to fly to the town which meant that they were upon us by the time the sirens started up. But as soon as the planes took off from the aircraft-carriers the local warning service turned off all lights in the town.

One of our guests that evening was a fisherman by the name of Ngo Tung Bac who sailed the gulf to bring in his catch. He had brought along a thick exercise-book with him. At first he hid his light under a bushel, but later agreed

A woman-worker at the Hongay coal-grading depot





to show it to us. The exercise book was full of poems.

We asked him to read us some of them. Ngo Tung Bac complied with our request in a sing-song voice sometimes with a smile and sometimes wearing a serious expression. He was clearly reliving the events which had inspired him to write his poems.



*I hasten to write a song
About my beloved sea,
About the fisherman's soul . . .*

Those were the opening lines in his book.

Vietnam is a country of rare beauty and the beauty of its landscape calls forth inspiration of rare beauty in men's hearts. This is perhaps why there are so many poets in Vietnam and the Temple of Literature and the Poetry Hill.

Ngo Tung Bac as a child had been in the service of a rich landowner and taken buffaloes out to pasture. Then he worked in a hospital but always dreamt of going to sea.

"Fishermen always stick by each other and are very brave," Bac assured us. He was a handsome young man of twenty-six with finely chiselled features and had a voice with a melodious ring to it.

*I had a sister once,
Who sailed the bay for fish . . .
Burnt black by the sun were her eyes . . .
When it seemed all would perish,
When junks tossed under stormy skies,
I was calm—
In my thoughts at my sister's side.
Then on a quiet summer's night
The foe with black wings so wide
Soared down, destroying in its flight
Junk and fisher-girl . . .
Why do the guiltless have to die?
As through the waves my course I ply
Clearly rings out my sister's cry:
Revenge!*

He also wrote of the beauties of his native Halong at sunset and how the ties that bind a man to the sea can only be compared with the bonds of true love.

I must confess that despite the fact that I did



Ngo Tung Bac—poet and fisherman

not know the language and was only able to hear a rough translation I was still spell-bound by the fisherman's poems. I had the impression that Glazunov's reactions were similar and the Vietnamese were quite ecstatic. I would hesitate to forecast what the future holds in store for Tung Bac and I am far from an expert in matters of poetry, however I feel sure that the fisherman-poet has bright prospects ahead of him. If only war does not distort that future. . . .

MINERS FROM QUANGNINH

Thanh, a Secretary from the provincial U.W.Y. committee accompanied us to the open-cast coal mines at Quangninh, the heart of the Vietnamese mining industry. He himself had first come to the area in 1954 when the French had handed over the pits and open-cast mines. All the French experts who had been working in those coal mines left the country and the Vietnamese had to manage on their own. Soon afterwards however Vietnamese engineers, graduates from Soviet universities, arrived on the scene. There was already a total of 1,500 tech-

nical staff there—graduates from universities and technical schools.

A few dozen miles of road, as yet not rendered totally impassable by bombing damage, winding its way through dense jungle and hills separated Hongay from Campha, the country's main coal centre. This area is of vital importance for the Vietnamese economy: it contains rich coal deposits, most of which are worked as open-cast mines, that provide North Vietnamese industry with a vital raw material which is also exported to many countries.

The gulf

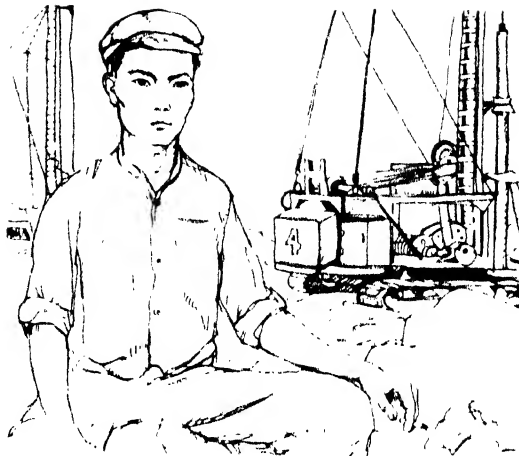


We drove past a mining village and our car started to climb uphill along a dusty road, puffing and panting as it went. We were sorry to see that the weather had let us down on that occasion: the gulf and all the hills were hidden in a thick, leaden mist. However the deputy director of the trust Bui Văn Vi who came out to meet us near a small wooden house on the hill said as he pointed skywards: "You have been lucky with the weather, comrades. Today there won't be any air-raids!" He was evidently overjoyed at the fact that there would be nothing to stop the miners getting on with their work in peace. That day's norm would be exceeded and there would be an extra delivery of coal, so vital for the country's economy.

The first thing we stopped to look at was a gigantic pit. At first glance it might have appeared as if a stadium was under construction, built specially to cater for giants. Twenty-five-ton tip-lorries and excavators looked like mere beetles at the bottom of it. The layers of rock that had been cleared away formed patterns reminiscent of the work of a cutting-mill. The black band of precious coal was right down almost at the very bottom.

A few years previously a large number of Vietnamese open-cast mines had been reconstructed with the help of Soviet experts and equipment. So far these mines are not working at full capacity and the trust will continue to expand. It was for the most part Soviet machinery that was being used at the open-cast mine which we visited.

A miner's lot is never an easy one. At first glance those who work above ground in open-cast mines are much better off. They are free from the dangers of explosions and there are no roofs and walls to fall in on top of them, instead of a closed-in feeling there is a bright



Hero of Labour Vu Huu Son is an excavator operator

blue sky and the sun overhead. However these miners from Quangninh had a harder time of it than their colleagues underground. The fact that they were exposed to fresh air and the sky was for them merely a source of additional worries and problems. The Americans were aware how important it was for the country that the work of these miners should proceed without interruption and they were doing everything within their power to disrupt it.

At any minute the bright blue sky could be transformed from a balm for the eyes to a roaring hell. Those harbingers of death, the American Phantoms used to appear overhead many times each day and start bombing and

shelling. Then the miners would shoulder their rifles and man the anti-aircraft guns that stood nearby at the ready.

One of the Heroes of Labour at work in that mine, an excavator operator by the name of Vu Huu Son interrupted his work for a few minutes to come and talk to us; it was from him that we learnt that the miners had just coined a new rallying slogan: "Let us defeat the American aggressors through our labour." However one would be completely justified in asserting that the miners of Quangninh also made an important contribution to the ultimate defeat of the aggressors in battle, for a considerable number of enemy planes have been shot down by the competent marksmen of the miners' detachments of the People's Volunteer Corps. The title "Invincibles" had been conferred on one of those detachments which had been presented with a special banner from the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, for bringing down two Phantoms.

Vu Huu Son also told us how difficult it had been to get the mines working properly after the country had been liberated from the French colonisers. They had left chaos behind them and most of the machinery and equipment had been worn-out and obsolete. It was then that Soviet experts and Soviet machinery had come to the rescue.

"Yes," said Vu with a sigh, "we really had our hands full of problems to cope with then! Nevertheless we managed to fulfil the targets for the First Five-Year Plan ahead of schedule and at the moment we are also ahead of the current targets. A new generation of experienced personnel has grown up in the meantime. In this open-cast mine alone we have got seven engineers and there are over a hundred men with

technical qualifications at a secondary level, nearly all young people."

I asked Vu Huu Son to tell us something about the most interesting people at that particular mine, about those who had distinguished themselves both in their work and military feats. He gave me a telling smile: "Why pick out anyone in particular? That kind of thing can lead to conceit, which is something we do not want to encourage at any price. We believe that even the title Hero of Labour conferred on a single individual is a common feat, a collective achievement."

This attitude was indeed utterly characteristic of the Vietnamese, this urge not to single themselves out, not to talk of their own achievements. They always put their comrades first and what they had achieved through common efforts.

After a short pause Vu went on: "Hero of Labour is not a title that allows you to sit back and rest on your laurels. You have to prove yourself worthy of it, day in, day out." Then he stretched out his small, hard hand to us for a farewell handshake. A moment later the enormous bucket of his excavator was letting out a loud, scraping noise as it buried its teeth into a block of anthracite.

On our return to Hanoi after that visit to Quangninh we learnt that an exhibition of Glazunov's works had been opened in the capital. It had been set up in a smallish hall where there was not enough room to display all the drawings he had completed during our visit.

Later articles appeared in the local papers about Glazunov's work complete with reproductions of a number of his drawings. The exhibition was visited by large numbers every day.

A woman from the coal-grading depot



CONFIDENT OF VICTORY

Rocket troops



The time was drawing near for us to bid farewell to heroic Vietnam, to its resolute, courageous people. On the day of our departure we had a meeting with Comrade Le Duan, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Working People's Party. Glazunov and I made the journey together with representatives of a Soviet cultural delegation that was also in Hanoi at the time.

Comrade Le Duan greeted all present with a smile and said: "People from the Soviet Union often visit Vietnam." He then went on to talk of the inestimable significance of cultural collaboration between our two countries and of the facilities provided for Vietnamese to study and train in the Soviet Union.

"Our students," he continued, "who study in the Soviet Union work not only to promote the good of their own country, when they return after graduation or simply for holidays, but also make an important contribution to the advance of the whole of Southeast Asia. Such possibilities were not open to me," he added by way of conclusion.

After a short pause while tea was poured out, Le Duan went on: "The significance of the October Revolution for our people is beyond compare. We revolutionaries of the older generation have always celebrated that day as a great occasion, although actions of that kind held out prospects of chains and prison. In 1930 I and my comrades were in prison on November 7th, yet all the same we clambered up on to the prison wall and shouted out slogans in honour of the Soviet Union. Now when we no longer live under a colonial régime, we make a point of celebrating that great day with all due ceremony.

"Our victory would have been impossible without the October Revolution. Our August

Revolution could never have taken place had it not been for your victory over nazi Germany and Japan.

"It would also be impossible for us to carry on without your material help. Equally important for us however is your moral support, the statements of the Soviet Government and people in support of the just struggle we are waging here in Vietnam.

"Our country was incredibly poor and under-developed when it first gained independence, thanks to the long years under the imperialists we came to power empty-handed. Yet now we are convinced that we shall win through, that South Vietnam will be liberated."

Turning to Hya Glazunov, Le Duan said with a smile:

"A visit to South Vietnam would be very interesting for an artist. At the moment, admittedly, such a visit is out of the question but one day it will be possible, of that you can be sure.

"There is still a good deal of hardship in store for us in our struggle against the American aggressors. What other people can you name that has been fighting non-stop for so many years?"

"After our victory in 1954 I worked for another two years in South Vietnam and I can truly say that what the people of South Vietnam longs for most of all is peace. I say this to you as a representative of the people of the South. That is the bright goal for which we are fighting."

First Secretary Le Duan drew particular attention to the heroism displayed by Vietnamese women, and to the way in which they carried out their three most important duties.

Le Duan gave us a detailed account of the ways in which the Vietnamese people was mobilising all its resources to beat back American aggression. He mentioned the names of many



heroes and in conclusion pointed out that the heroism of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 was an inspiring example for the Vietnamese.

After that there were cordial farewells, and we set off. When we got into the car Le Thanh announced that we had been granted a permit to visit a unit of rocket troops. We thought it would be impossible to fit in because it was already midday and our plane was due to leave at seven o'clock that evening, and we still had to get packed and collect up Glazunov's drawings. . . .

"What time would we get back?"

"If there are not too many air-raids we should be back by six o'clock."

What would happen if the opposite would be the case required no explanation! However

we could not possibly leave Vietnam without visiting the rocket troops.

We stopped outside the anti-aircraft defence headquarters to pick up a senior lieutenant on the staff there, who was to be our guide. He looked tired out and after greeting us he took off his steel helmet, put it on his knees and after telling the driver to go more quickly, because there was going to be an air-raid any minute, dozed right off. The weather was perfect for the American pilots that day, hot and sunny, and not a cloud to be seen.

The soldiers on duty at the check-point on the outskirts of Hanoi were most reluctant to let us through. "It's a very dangerous time now," explained one of the officers. "Raids always begin at about this time of day when the weather's sunny."

We were still racing through the suburbs when the piercing whine of the sirens started up. The commander of the coastal defence turned out to be quite right.

The presence of the officer from the anti-aircraft defence headquarters meant that we were not stopped anywhere en route. We drove at a high speed along the deserted main road and along dusty tracks past rice-fields and small villages.

At last the senior lieutenant made a sign to the driver to stop near a small grove of trees. Immediately the car was surrounded by a crowd of small boys. All around there was nothing but bushes, buffaloes peacefully chewing grass and small boys. If it had not been for the characteristic hum of the radar not far away one would never have dreamt that rocket troops were stationed nearby.

The US Air Force started bombing the DRV on February 6th, 1965. However these barbarous bombing raids did not go unpunished: North Vietnamese anti-aircraft units soon started marking up their haul of shot-down Phantoms, Skyhawks and other types of enemy aircraft.

The Americans were forced to admit, "... Since our air attacks began the enemy has accomplished a tremendous and very formidable build-up in his air defences. The North Vietnamese air defence environment overall, including anti-aircraft fire, surface-to-air missiles, and MIG aircraft, has been described as the most deadly the world has ever seen. The massive air defence has exacted a heavy toll of American aircraft and pilots."

We sat for some time in the grass talking to the sprightly little boys. Eventually our guide said that the all-clear had been given and we could go and see the rocket crew.

When we got to the rocket emplacement we

were met by two elderly and extremely sunburnt captains, Comrade Lê Tinh—commander of the battalion, and Comrade Trần Hoa, the battalion commissar. Full of smiles like all Vietnamese they showed us round their "set-up". We were taken over to the enormous camouflaged rockets well hidden from outside observers, that were ready to rend the deceptive quiet with a mighty roar and soar skywards. The radar and all the rest of the battalion's equipment were firmly embedded in the ground.

I asked what had been the outcome of the air-raid that had taken place just before our arrival. "Five groups of American planes skirted Hanoi to the southwest," the captain informed us. "This time it was US planes based in Thailand, although it is more usual for them to come from aircraft-carriers. The anti-aircraft defence headquarters supplies us with a constant stream of information as to the enemy's movements."

The commissar meanwhile gave one of the rockets an appreciative pat with the palm of his hand saying, "*Tot lam!*" (which in Vietnamese means "Fine stuff!").

That particular rocket battalion for anti-aircraft defence had been set up within the last few years. Almost all the officers who had joined the rocket troops had had their military training in the course of the war against the French. Many of them had been anti-aircraft gunners in the past. The soldiers on the other hand were for the most part very young members of the UMY and fairly new recruits.

All the men in the battalion lived on the spot. While on active service they were both improving their military qualifications and following study courses. They slept on the spot as well ready to face the enemy at any moment of the day or night.

After we had been shown round we sat down

for a chat under a wide camouflage canopy. The commissar pointed to young banana trees planted round the dugouts and the breastwork: "The local inhabitants are taking care of us, you see. The whole population are behind us and help out all they possibly can. When fighting is in progress members of the People's Volunteer Corps use rifles and machine-guns to shoot at the enemy and have scored considerable successes."

We asked the men how many planes they had shot down altogether. In tones of exceptional modesty Comrade Lê Tinh replied to my question: "We work in liaison with artillery batteries and have a common 'score'. In the course of approximately twenty encounters with the enemy we have brought down twenty planes."

Then Lê Tinh introduced us to the foremost members of the battalion—a young soldier Bui Van Dinh and sergeant Nguyễn Đăng Hào who was in charge of the rocket installations. They were both very modest and somewhat shy. Gradually however we managed to draw them out.

Suddenly a telephone started ringing. Lê Tinh picked up the receiver and gave a monosyllabic answer to what was said to him. Then he turned to us to say that according to information from anti-aircraft defence headquarters American planes were approaching.

A soft rustle like a gentle breeze passed through the assembled battalion and before we had time to look round the men were all at their posts.



Watching the skies



Vietnam will never surrender!



That same day we left Hanoi,
but our hearts shall always be
with you, Vietnam, our planet's
pain and pride.

Translated from the Russian by KATHARINE JUDELSON

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